M. Sholokov

At The Bidding of The Heart

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M. SHOLOKHOV

At the Bidding of the Heart

Essays, Sketches, Speeches, Papers

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Y. LUKIN

LIFE—THE WRITER —YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the photographs in this book shows Mikhail Sholokhov at his desk, looking through some of the correspondence that takes up quite a big part of his working day. From all parts of the USSR sacks of mail arrive at the village of Veshenskaya on the Don, where the writer lives. People write to him for advice or help in matters ranging from deeply personal concerns to problems of state significance. Many want to confide their thoughts to him, and tell him about themselves as they would to a wiser, older friend. Young people write to him, budding authors, too.

Much of Sholokhov's correspondence is of a purely business character. The mail brings him proof-sheets to read of collections of his early stories; a film-studio asks him to set the date for showing a new picture, based on one of his stories, in Veshenskaya; a theatre wants his counsel on a stage adaptation of his book.

Letters and telegrams arrive from publishers and organisations abroad, inquiring if Sholokhov is planning another of the journeys that have proved so useful in furthering fruitful cultural exchange and improving mutual understanding between nations.

On the International Scene

We had already left Tokyo far behind, and were driving in the burning sun towards the mountain area of Nikko. We still had many miles to go, and we were very thirsty. As we drove through the main square of a small town we saw, on one side of it, an unbroken row of souvenir booths and kiosks selling cigarettes and soft drinks. We decided to break our journey for a few minutes.

The booths were selling the products of native Japanese craftsmen, gifted and industrious workers who produce a huge variety of souvenirs. As we paused at one of the stalls, wondering what to buy for a souvenir of this unknown town in which we had chanced to stop, the young salesgirl asked the interpreter where we were from. On learning that we came from the Soviet Union, she asked whether the author, Sholokhov, was

with us. The newspapers had reported that he was travelling around Japan. Where was Sholokhov, how could she find him? When the interpreter told her Sholokhov was right there, a flurry of excitement ran through the stalls, the salesgirls disappeared briefly, to reappear carrying handsome volumes of Sholokhov's works and autograph tablets. Sholokhov was buying cigarettes, and here he was besieged by these friendly but determined admirers, escaping only after a short authographing session.

It should be emphasised that a stop in this little town was not pre-arranged, we were hot and thirsty; that's why we stopped there. No one could have foreseen this or have made any preparations for us. This was a completely unplanned, completely spontaneous encounter with young Japanese readers.

In Nikko itself we were to see the successful conclusion of a minor feat of endurance. A school-girl admirer of Sholokhov's work had read in a newspaper that he was visiting Japan at the invitation of the Japanese Association of Writers. The approximate route he would be following was given and Nikko was included. Knowing that the ancient temple in Nikko was one of the sights which foreign tourists rarely missed, the girl decided to wait at the gates in the hope of obtaining the writer's autograph. After five hours she began to lose heart; nevertheless, she stayed on. Her patience was rewarded. To her great embarrassment, she found herself being interviewed by reporters and photographed with Sholokhov. These photographs appeared in many newspapers and magazines and in one of them the girl is seen receiving the autograph for which she had waited so long.

In this case as in so many others the interpreters who accompanied us were indispensable and they deserve separate mention. Young but already widely known for their translations of Sholokhov's works, they were not ordinary tourist guides. Two of them, Tokuya Hara and Taku Egawa, continue in the steps of their fathers, who had made the first translations of *And Quiet Flows the Don* in Japan. Incidentally, the father of one of them, Tetsuya Baba, had made the first ever foreign translation of *And Quiet Flows the Don,* doing it as the chapters appeared in a magazine before the novel was brought out in book form.

* *

Winter 1965. A mild winter. The swans do not migrate south from the bay on the shore of which stands the royal

palace but feed here and are always present to welcome and see off the ships.

The ship they welcomed this time was the *Svea Yarl,* coming from the Finnish town of Turku and bringing to Stockholm the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature—Mikhail Sholokhov.

That week in December is now a kaleidoscope of impressions and memories—of the traditional ceremonies in the Concert Hall and the Town Hall, of formal receptions and less formal gatherings, of noisy press-conferences and friendly, cordial conversations.

A press-conference was held on the day of Sholokhov's arrival and of it the newspaper *Stockholms Tidningen* wrote: "On the first day of his stay in Stockholm Sholokhov has already broken all records—so many journalists have never before been gathered in the hall of the Grand Hotel."

At a reception organised by Tiden Publishers, which have done much to bring Sholokhov's writings to the attention of Swedish readers, the general director of the publishing house, Bengt Christell, greeted the author with the following words:

"As your publishers we rejoice with you, but not simply because we sell your books.... We are happy today because a great and truthful realistic art has been given recognition."

The awarding of the Nobel Prize to Sholokhov was made "for the artistic force and truthfulness with which, in his Don epopee, he described an historical era in the life of the Russian people".

In his speech during the presentation ceremony at the Concert Hall Dr. Anders Österling, President of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, spoke of the impressive realism with which the life of the Cossacks was described in *And Quiet Flows the Don.* It was a work powerful in every respect. The prize, he said, had come "late but, fortunately, not too late ... to enrich the list of winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature with the name of one of the most outstanding writers of modern times". Turning to Sholokhov, he added: "This prize is a just and grateful tribute to the significant contribution you have made to Soviet literature, a contribution which is as well known in our country as it is in the whole world."

In the less formal atmosphere of a banquet at the Town Hall, Dr. K.R. Gierow, permanent secretary for literature of the Swedish Academy, made a witty and eloquent speech. Curiously, the part of his speech that was addressed to Sholokhov rested on a literary figure that had evidently been suggested by

an imprecise translation in a newspaper report. However, this mistake was cleverly used by Dr. Gierow to demonstrate his remarkable oratory.

"Mr. Sholokhov," Dr. Gierow began, "when you were awarded the Nobel Prize, you were hunting in the Urals and, according to a Moscow newspaper, on that very day you shot two wild geese with one (!) long shot.... But if we take our hats off to you today as a crack shot among the Nobel Prize winners of the past year, this is because talk about such feats of marksmanship has a bearing on your work.

"An epic work such as yours could have been written with great sweep and breadth, with a stormy yet majestic flood of episodes and turns of speech, with a confident mastery in resolving the theme—and in virtue of all this it would already have been a masterpiece which would never be forgotten. It would have been possible to infuse it with a living feeling of the dramatic situation, with keen observation of every detail having artistic significance, with a passionate sympathy for man's fate—and all this would have made it a work forever to be loved. The uniting of both these possibilities is a token of genius, of your genius. It happens as rarely as getting two birds lined up for a shot. You secured both 'birds' with one 'stone'.

"Your tale of the old regime, desperately defending its tottering positions, and the new regime, struggling as desperately for each blood-soaked inch of ground, was conceived on a grand scale. The question is constantly suggested: what rules the world? And the answer is given: the heart. The heart of man, with its love and cruelty, sadness, hopes, humiliation and pride. The heart of man, the true field of battle whence come all the victories and defeats which fall to the lot of our world. Thus your art crosses all frontiers and we take it to our hearts with deep gratitude...."

...Amidst all these events the writer found time to meet many young people—the students of Stockholm and the old university town of Uppsala. More than 800 students came to meet Sholokhov in the Slavonic Institute and the university in Uppsala. Students and teachers alike showed enormous interest in the work of the outstanding Soviet writer and asked him a great number of questions, receiving lively, informal answers. An atmosphere of friendliness, trust and mutual respect was immediately established that was further enhanced by the gentle humour native to Sholokhov, a humour which gives conversation an especially warm tone and always wins the sympathies of those with whom he talks.

I remember now the auditorium of another of Europe's ancient universities. Students had gathered there to find in Sholokhov's works the answers to philosophical questions; to seek out advice on how a man should live his life. The writer was present in spirit only, yet in a sense the young people talked with him and appealed to him, asking him for support in the passionate disputes which flared up during their discussions of life's varied and important problems.

These young men and women were meeting in Jena, at the Slavonic Institute. They had come from the GDR's largest universities to take part in a conference which was to sum up the work carried out by the higher educational establishments of the entire republic. The theme of the conference was socialist humanism in the work of Mikhail Sholokhov.

The meeting, which was packed, was presided over by a young female student. Theses for discussion, which had been produced collectively by three students and circulated among all the conference's participants, and questions put by the three authors were debated. Students of all levels of seniority and from every part of the GDR spoke, some of them several times; as the discussion developed, more and more topical problems literally interposed themselves into the debate.

At one point two speakers appeared on the stage at once: opinions in the group which these two girls represented were divided and therefore two people had been given the task of defending the differing points of view.

Some of the students did not yet have a deep enough grasp of the artistic and aesthetic problems involved, nor of the essence of Sholokhov's realism, to competently analyse his consummate craft. And so some problems, such as the question of the concrete historical circumstances in which his characters were placed, took second place to discussions of their actions and patterns of thought from the point of view of the moral and aesthetic demands of our day.

However, in this very fact lay the special value of the discussions. Parallels were drawn between Sholokhov's images and the characters created by the most popular modern German writers. Debate sprang up on the responsibility of the Communist for his neighbour (the initial spur for this was the relationship between Grigory Melekhov and Mikhail Koshevoi in the novel *And Quiet Flows the Don*), on whether all means should be considered humane if they are directed towards a humane end, on whether the problem of the tragic exists under socialism, on what makes a character "positive"—his intentions

and actions or his actions alone (disputes here centred round the person of Nagulnov) and on a variety of other questions.

Of course, these young men and women were rediscovering what has already been discovered, finding what has already been found. But never mind. The important thing was that every one of them wanted to arrive independently at the truth, to solve life's problems and to solve them for himself and his contemporaries. Reading Sholokhov's writings awoke in them the urge to discuss such vital questions as the shaping of a world outlook; it made them ponder on the place they should assume in life and their duty as citizens, and the need to affirm the moral and ethical standards upheld by people struggling for a communist tomorrow and a new world.

The salutatory address (laudatio) presented to Sholokhov by the German scholars who came to Veshenskaya to hand the writer the diploma of honorary doctorate of philosophy conferred upon him by Karl Marx University in Leipzig, concluded with the following significant words:

"The works of Sholokhov have become an inexhaustible wellspring for our people and our youth, including students, from which they draw the ideals of an authentic revolutionary spirit, firm adherence to the Party, irreproachable probity, deep humaneness and total dedication to the cause of their lives."

At the Bidding of the Heart

"I am with you this evening not only at the call of duty, being in charge of work with young writers, but also at the bidding of my heart."

This was how Mikhail Sholokhov began his speech in the House of Party Education in Rostov-on-Don on July 2, 1969. He was speaking to members of the Bulgarian-Soviet Club for Young Artists at one of their regular meetings; the general theme of the gathering was "The responsibility of the artist before history and the people". His audience included young Bulgarian and Soviet writers, journalists, actors, directors, painters, sculptors, historians, architects, musicians and also guests of the club from Hungary, Poland, Rumania and Czechoslovakia.

He enjoyed meeting young colleagues most of all, he said, because this gave him the opportunity of coming into contact with young people, of finding out what they were thinking and of joining them in reflecting on the responsibility of the writer

before society. He spoke about the role of the artist in the life of society in a world of ideological clashes, and of the artist's mission and duty. Some of the things happening in literature worried him, he said, while others inspired him with confidence in the future of a literature that would serve the people, nurture patriots and internationalists and help build communism. He condemned a liberal attitude in literature towards anything that could have a corruptive influence on the youth, and talked of the fresh, healthy young voices now being heard in poetry and prose. He reminded his audience of Gorky's question, which still has an immediate application: "Whose side are you on, master-craftsmen of culture?" Sympathetic advice, albeit uncompromising in character, and collective discussion were useful to the artist; it was essential that the writer should be extremely exacting towards himself and his art, Sholokhov said, and illustrated this by several examples drawn from his own experience while writing *And Quiet Flows the Don, Virgin Soil Upturned* and *They Fought for Their Country*. He emphasised several times that in addressing young people his aim was not to moralise but to hear what they had on their minds and to share with them the conclusions he himself had reached.

Memorable too were the words of the well-known Bulgarian poet, Lyubomir Levchev, at the meeting:

"The most important feature of this gathering has been meeting you. This has been its crown. Your books have nurtured and are continuing to nurture generations of Communists, generations of Komsomol members, generations of fighters. The most important Bulgarian writers have learned their craft from you. Some of them perished in the struggle for our freedom, others have devoted their entire lives to building socialism in our country, while still others are working and learning from you. There is a Bulgarian epic tale about 'the thousand magic wells', which give sight to the blind and strength to the soldier, that he might attain victory. In meeting you we aimed, as it were, at reaching one of those wells, from which we might draw strength for our future work. Clearly, major tasks lie ahead of us, for which some, even if only a tiny part, of Sholokhov's inspired truth and Sholokhov's talent will be needed."

Sholokhov's conversations with young writers from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries during June, 1967 in Veshenskaya took place in a similar atmosphere. While reflecting with his younger colleagues on modern literature and its indissoluble link with the life of society, on the principal problems connected with literary development in the modern age

and on the moral constitution of the artist and his duty before the people, Sholokhov spoke of young writers as the hope of our literature; it was vital to strengthen creative contacts between young and old writers. He called on the coming generation of Soviet writers to follow undeviatingly the best traditions of Soviet literature and to be uncompromising towards any manifestations of bourgeois ideology, and spoke of the constantly growing responsibility of the artist before society and of the devotion of the Soviet writer to the interests of the Party and the people.

During an informal exchange of opinions on different creative problems the conversation turned to the question of the writer's right to make mistakes. Sholokhov directed especial attention to this problem:

"I think that no writer, irrespective of his eminence or age, should claim for himself a privileged position. As regards 'the freedom to make mistakes', if a collective farm team leader makes a mistake the chairman of the farm will always put him right. This is a mistake of a local character and will not harm other people. The writer, in making a mistake in a published work, leads thousands of readers into error: therein lies the danger of our profession. Freedom of the spirit and creative freedom are all very well, but for heaven's sake let us be more careful about mistakes. Every one of us is read, every one of us has, if not 'a universal readership', as someone here put it, then certainly some thousands of highly attentive and demanding readers. Restless, unsettled spirits are to be found not only among writers, and a mistake—the more so if it is important, even a mistake arising from painful ponderings and thus justified in some degree for the given individual—leads to thousands of mistakes in thousands of destinies, in the outlooks of thousands of other people. Perhaps even a surgeon, if we are talking about the moral right to make a mistake, can have such a right while carrying out an operation: only one person will suffer. But when we 'operate' with specific material and make a mistake and this achieves wide currency, such a mistake, I repeat, is a thousand times more dangerous. We must be doubly cautious, and sometimes we should squash our restless spirits so that others are not harmed."

At the end of March 1969 the 5th All-Union Conference of Young Writers, which was held in Moscow, concluded its work. Sholokhov, who was passing through the city after returning from an overseas trip, invited some of the conference's participants to visit him. They discussed the work of the conference

with him, its various sessions and seminars, and told him of the impressions it had made on them. Sholokhov wrote in the memorial book of the conference: "I am delighted at the success of the conference! As always, I wish young people achievement, daring and success."

During this meeting the conversation again turned to the many problems of life and to the creative paths along which young writers and poets were developing. Sholokhov warned them against devoting themselves exclusively to this work too early in life, and reminded them once again that no true artist could isolate himself from life. He stressed the importance of mastering every element of the writer's craft and of doggedly struggling to bring to perfection every word in a composition.

Conversations between Sholokhov and young writers revolve around the immediate problems of literature; the place of the artist in the life of the people and his duty before the present and the future are invariably discussed. The questions raised and the areas of human activity touched upon during encounters with, let us say, young factory workers or farmers, cosmonauts, soldiers, sailors, students, or in his correspondence with school-children are, of course, quite different.

But all these meetings, whether in the flesh or on the printed page, come about "at the bidding of the heart" of a great writer and citizen, whose thoughts have always been turned towards the destiny of the younger generation, towards the future and towards the present in which the future of his own people is already being forged.

At this point it seems appropriate to note some of the salient features in the creative life of the author of *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned*. Sholokhov made his debut in literature as a writer of short sketches. These were followed by stories, which may be called a prelude to his great novels, and which first appeared in Soviet youth publications. Indeed, Sholokhov began his writing career by working for the Moscow youth newspaper *Yunosheskaya Pravda* (later re-named *Molodoi Leninist), Zhurnal Krestyanskoi Molodyozhi* and the journal *Komsomoliya.* He also contributed to an occasinal literary and artistic anthology published by the group of writers known as the Young Guard and his work appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and in the magazine *Smena.*

Sholokhov has always remained faithful to the close links binding him to youth publications and publishers. In 1962 the Molodaya Gvardia (Young Guard) publishing house celebrated its fortieth anniversary and among the messages of congratu-

lation was a telegram from the writer: "I regret profoundly that pressure of work prevents me from attending this splendid celebration. Yours is the enormously important task of bringing up our youth and for this work we, the older generation of readers and writers, hold you in warm affection, value you highly and deeply respect you. Please accept from me, too, my best wishes of happiness in life and success in work to each one of you personally. Your reluctantly ageing Young Guard, Mikhail Sholokhov." An inscription made in the visitors' book of the publishing house the following year gently emphasises the continuity of Molodaya Gvardia traditions and the indissoluble links between the older and younger generations: "I am always happy to be in the company of Molodaya Gvardia's younger authors! I seem to grow younger myself. . . ."

The essential feature of these varied and numerous meetings is Sholokhov's readiness to address his young readers not only through his books and the characters into whom he has breathed life, but also directly, in face-to-face exchanges of opinion.

These meetings with Sholokhov are attended by all sorts of people: young writers, workers, farmers, soldiers, and also our celebrated Soviet cosmonauts. The late Yuri Gagarin, and Boris Volynov have been Sholokhov's guests in Veshenskaya.

Sholokhov is strongly averse to "holding forth", to adopting an academic or didactic tone and generally prefers to answer questions put to him personally. He likes to provoke a lively exchange between himself and his audience. The formal and uninterrupted method of expressing his thoughts is reserved for essays and newspaper articles, or for speeches before large audiences.

A Humanist Is the Man Who Fights

All Sholokhov's writing is impregnated with the concept of struggle for the good of man and with the ideas of communism: this is true both of his fictional works and of the body of publicist material he has produced. The present volume brings together Sholokhov's basic writings in the latter field, including speeches and radio talks.

In 1931, he published his article "Along the Right Bank of the Don" in *Pravda*, in which he wrote with concern and profound knowledge about the pressing tasks confronting the farms, and indicated the faults and the hindrances to efficiency in collective farm management.

The article "For Honest Work by Writer and Critic" (1934) was directed against waste in literary work. In the vigorous controversy sparked off by Gorky's criticism of the language used in Panferov's works Sholokhov stood firmly on the side of Gorky, sharply debating with Panferov and Serafimovich and condemning those literary critics whose views were coloured by their sympathies with particular cliques.

The preface to the English publication of *And Quiet Flows the Don* is also polemic in character. In it the author explains the basic idea of this already world-famous novel and also of his new work, *Virgin Soil Upturned,* and corrects the erroneous interpretation of his work then current among interested foreign readers and critics. In connection with *And Quiet Flows the Don* he wrote of "the colossal changes which have taken place in life, in everyday activities and human psychology as a result of the First World War and the Revolution"; it was, he wrote, his task "to show the different social strata of the Don population during the two wars (World War One and the Civil War) and the Revolution" and "to trace the tragic fate of individuals drawn into the powerful vortex of events that occurred between 1914 and 1921...."

In 1934, a month after the All-Union Writers' Congress, Sholokhov delivered a major speech on literature as a part of the proletarian cause before an audience of factory workers and railwaymen in Rostov-on-Don.

Next, he wrote an article demanding that the overall educational level of the collective farmer be raised to that of the worker, another article telling the heroic story of the Podkushchevka farmstead during the Civil War, of its people who formed the core of the collective farm established in that area; and then two essays devoted to the memories of Nikolai Ostrovsky and Suleiman Stalsky. Sholokhov spoke at the meeting of students and teachers on the occasion of the death of Maxim Gorky.

In his speeches as a deputy of the Supreme Soviet, Sholokhov dwells on what is true and what is sham love for the homeland, on history which tests men by their deeds rather than their words, on the destinies of the Don Cossacks and on Soviet patriotism.

Highly indicative of Sholokhov's attitude were the affectionate and respectful words he wrote on the occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the birth of A. S. Serafimovich: "Serafimovich belongs to that generation of writers from whom we younger ones learnt. I owe him a great personal debt since

he was the first to give me support and encouragement and recognise me as a writer at the beginning of my literary career."

On the twentieth anniversary of the YCL Sholokhov wrote that the Komsomol youth, guided by the Party, had routed the enemy in the Civil War, had struggled to set up collective farms, and had been in the vanguard of those building Soviet industry, raising high the banner of socialist competition. The seeds of Bolshevism had, he wrote, fallen on fertile soil.

A more recent anniversary took place when the Theatre of Young Cossack Collective Farmers in Veshenskaya celebrated its second birthday. Sholokhov spoke then of the theatre as a "bright flame of art" which had been lit in a Don village and which must flare up throughout the region, so that art might penetrate ever more deeply into the broad masses of the people.

A logical conclusion to the first period of Sholokhov's activity as a publicist is formed by his famous speech to the 18th Congress of the CPSU. He spoke to the delegates about the work of poets and writers from the sister national republics of the USSR. The fresh voices of the national writers had merged with the stream of Russian literature, enriching it and making it truly the product of all the Soviet peoples. Among the examples brought forward by Sholokhov were the songs of Jambul, "so compelling in their simplicity", the "enchanting sweetness of Georgian poems", and the "fanciful, melodious lines" of Suleiman Stalsky. He then spoke of the relations between Soviet writers and readers:

"The people whom we serve with our art never hesitate to express their opinion of us. We are criticised, upbraided when necessary, supported when we meet with failure, praised when we deserve praise, and every one of us is constantly aware of the guiding, gentle hand of the people."

Sholokhov spoke with pride of himself and many other delegates, who were taking part for the first time in a Party congress, as the first young shoots of the Soviet intelligentsia nurtured by the Party; they would be followed, he said, by millions upon millions of people to whom culture was already second nature.

The approaching world war cast a shadow over the joyous feeling of rapid advance and ever increasing achievement in communist construction that characterised Soviet society at that time. The year was 1939, and Sholokhov's words at the congress rang in people's memories like a pledge:

"It should be said quite frankly that Soviet writers do not belong to the sentimental breed of West-European pacifists.... If the enemy attacks our country, we Soviet writers shall lay down our pens and pick up another weapon in response to the call of the Party and Government.... In the ranks of the Red Army, under its glorious red colours, we shall strike down the enemy as none had done before us.... After routing the enemy we shall write books describing how we went about it. These books will be of service to our people and will be a warning to the surviving aggressors, if any."

All this came true.

Sholokhov's pen was replaced by another weapon, but it did not fall idle. The newspaper sketches and publicist material as well as the books Sholokhov produced during the war years served our people well and were both a warning and a grim reminder to anyone who would start a new war forgetting the inglorious fate that had befallen the initiators of World War Two.

On June 26, 1941, the newspaper *Bolshevistsky Don* quoted Sholokhov's words to detachments of Cossacks as they departed for the front. Speaking on June 24, the writer and patriot had reminded his fellow countrymen, who had taken up arms at the call of the Motherland, of the heroic, victorious traditions bequeathed them by history. He told them, too, of a telegram he had sent to the People's Commissariat of Defence in which he said that he was donating his State Prize to the defence fund and that he stood ready at any moment to join the ranks of the Red Army of Workers and Peasants to defend the socialist Motherland to his last drop of blood.

The conclusion of the article "On the Don", which appeared in *Pravda* on July 4, 1941, summed up what was for a long while to be the dominant theme of Sholokhov's publicist writings: "Two feelings live in the hearts of the Don Cossacks: love for their Motherland and hatred for the nazi invaders. Their love will live forever, but may their hatred last until the enemy has been routed completely."

The war had only just begun but even in those early days Sholokhov's words rang with absolute conviction and complete faith in his own people: "Woe unto those who have aroused this hatred and the cold fury of the people's anger!"

On the first anniversary of the outbreak of war *Pravda* published a story under the title "The Science of Hatred". Although cast in fictional form, the story is pronouncedly publicist in character and represents new departure for Sholo-

khov. In his own way lieutenant Gerasimov, the story's principal character, reflects the ideas expressed by Sholokhov in his first wartime sketch. It might seem, the lieutenant observes, that love and hatred can never be placed side by side and he recalls the Russian fable about the dray horse and a timid doe, which could never be harnessed together. "Well, we have done it," he adds. "And the two are pulling well together! . . . We carry the love for our country in our hearts, and while our hearts are beating it will stay there: our hatred we always carry on the tips of our bayonets." (We were initially doubtful as to whether a story could legitimately be included in a collection of publicist writings but decided that this was justified on the following grounds: when it first appeared "The Science of Hatred" was not assigned by the author to a particular genre—this in itself allowed it to be placed among his contemporaneous publicist writings; in any event, the story is so strongly publicist in character that without it a collection of Sholokhov's publicist writings from the war years would appear incomplete. Indeed, it is very difficult to conceive of such a collection without "The Science of Hatred".)

"Armed with pencils, note-books and light machine guns, we rode in a car to the frontline. . . ." So begins one of the sketches Sholokhov wrote as a war correspondent. In his "Letter to American Friends", written towards the end of the second year of the war, he states: "As a war correspondent I was at the Southern, South-Western and Western fronts." The "Letter" holds a position of great significance among Sholokhov's publicist work. In it he tells his American readers that he is writing a novel about the Great Patriotic War to be called *They Fought for Their Country*, in which he wants to describe the burden falling upon the Soviet people in their battle against the German nazi invasion; in the meantime, while the novel is as yet unfinished, it is his intention to talk to his American friends not as a writer but simply as a citizen of one of the Allied countries.

Historians, a thousand or two thousand years from now, studying the nature of war—a phenomenon that will by then have long vanished—will probably feel a lump rising in their throat just as we do now when they read the words which, across an ocean both literal and metaphorical, a writer belonging to one country addressed to the people of another. Sholokhov wrote: "The war has entered the lives of every one of us with all the grimness proper to an attempt by one nation to utterly wipe out or devour another. What is happening at the

front, what is happening in a total war has already left an indelible imprint on the lives of all of us. I have lost my mother, killed by a bomb dropped by a German plane during an air raid on our village, which has no strategic importance whatsoever. The operation pursued an aim appropriate to brigands —to scatter the population so that people could not drive their cattle east in face of the advancing German army. German shells have destroyed my house and my library. I have already lost many friends—writers and fellow villagers—killed at the front. For a long time I was out of touch with my family, during which time my son was ill and I was unable to help in any way. But, after all, these are private troubles, the personal grief most of us know. These griefs add up to a general, nationwide tragedy which people have to suffer when war comes into their lives. Our own personal tragedies cannot overshadow for us the sufferings of the people about which no writer, no artist has yet been able to tell the world."

It was impossible to come through this war without smearing one's hands in blood, Sholokhov wrote. War demanded sweat and blood. If denied, it would take double the toll. The consequences of hesitation could be irreparable. And then, in words that are burnt into the page: "You have not yet seen the blood of your kin on the threshold of your home. I have, and so I have the right to talk to you so bluntly."

The writer Olga Bergholts has preserved for history—the history of our people, the history of literature and ultimately the history of humanity—a short address by Sholokhov to the sons and daughters of the hero-city of Leningrad, broadcast during the days of the blockade:

"My Leningrad comrades! We know how hard it is for you to live, work and fight while surrounded by the enemy. People remember you everywhere—on every front and in the rear. The steel founder in the far-off Urals, looking at a molten stream of metal, thinks about you and works without letup to speed the hour of your liberation; the man on the battlelines, fighting the German invaders in Donbas, strikes them down not only for his own ravaged Ukraine but also for the great sufferings which the enemy has inflicted on you, Leningraders.... We eagerly await that hour when the ring of the blockade will be broken and the great Soviet Land will press to its bosom the heroic sons and daughters of Leningrad—a city bathed in eternal glory."

On May 13, 1945 *Pravda* published an article entitled "A Victory Such As History Has Never Known". If, in the history

of the world, there has never been so bloody and destructive a war as that which has just ended, wrote Sholokhov, then it is also true that no army has ever scored such brilliant victories as has the Soviet Army, nor "appeared before the amazed eyes of mankind in such a radiance of glory, might and greatness."

Some of the essential features distinguishing the creative manner of Sholokhov's publicist work as a whole, or at any rate its more outstanding examples, are clearly manifested in his wartime articles and sketches. All were written in response to immediate, pressing problems; all possess an organic combination of the qualities usually associated with epic literature—a broad grasp of the events that go to make up the life of the people and, simultaneously, a reflective, concentrated insight into the elements of the inner life of his heroes, the ordinary people who participate in and create these historic events. With a small yet quite perceptible touch Sholokhov brings a description or a narrative to life, in a sketch or even in a newspaper account. It may be an incident seen by the writer himself, or something typical in the fate or behaviour of an individual which is, in fact, a general feature of the Soviet character.

Articles by Sholokhov devoted to the most important events and happenings in the life of his country—those aspects of contemporary reality which most stir the hearts and minds of the people—always very clearly express the attitude taken by a citizen of a socialist country to these issues and occurrences, and his assessment of them.

The clarity of thought and evaluative insight of these writings, their emotionality, their profound devotion to the interests of the Party and the people, and the simplicity of form in which the content is expressed, make these articles comprehensible to the widest possible readership. In addressing the many millions of people making up his audience, the writer talks of what concerns him personally, winning over his readers by his sincerity and increasing the impact of his words by the powerful imagery characteristic of the Sholokhov style.

The themes of socialist, militant humanism and the struggle for peace enter ever more insistently into Sholokhov's postwar publicist writings. His themes are extremely varied, as are the ways in which he handles them and his motives for raising them, but his philosophical directedness, his stand and his guiding principles are consistent and unvarying.

The article "A Word About Motherland" fully justifies the plangency of its title, for it is, indeed, one of Sholokhov's most

powerful publicist works. It was written in 1948 when the painful memories of the bloody war that had ended less than three years previously were still fresh.

Why does the writer so peremptorily, so mercilessly compel us to re-live that which is already past, to suffer again that which has already been suffered, why does he reopen the wounds that have already healed? The answer is simple: so that people should not forget that which must not be forgotten while the world is divided into two camps. So that people should realise the whole vital necessity of the struggle for peace and not forget the lessons taught them by the science of hatred during the war; so that hatred for the enemies of peace should live in their hearts, hatred for those who "in their satanic blind folly are preparing to plunge mankind, which has yet to recover from its appalling experience, into a new war". For the time has not yet come when we can forget about the threat of new wars: therefore, let hatred for the instigators of wars "seethe with fury doubled many times over in our hearts against those for whom there is no name in the language of humans, against those who are still not sated with the profits they have made on the blood of millions.... It will come in useful at the right moment!"

In this article, as is usual with Sholokhov, the themes of love and hate not only exist side by side but are intermingled: love for the Motherland breeds hatred for its enemies, while love of individual man and humanity in general breeds hatred for its less than human enslavers.

"A Word About Motherland" is a means whereby the author, through the use of striking contrasts, shows how the life of the working people has changed in our country during the years of Soviet power and how great have been the transformations in the economy and in the lives and characters of men. Sholokhov writes of the Communist Party, which has nurtured the qualities of heroic struggle in the people and led them to unparalleled advances; he talks of the "only fair system of government", Soviet power, which the people found "at the cost of many years of suffering and by a great revolutionary struggle... and consolidated with their blood and their toil" and of our people's unshakeable faith in this power.

As a humanist the writer responds with passion to events in Spain, Korea, Vietnam.... In the vigour of its attack on imperialists and their crimes his publicist writings often assume a pamphleteering flavour and tone.

The place of the artist and his role in the modern world, the function of the writer and the writer's responsibility before his own people and the future of mankind are topics which naturally arise in the course of many of Sholokhov's writings and speeches. His addresses to Party congresses and meetings of writers and literary scholars are devoted in large part to these topics which are also raised in his articles and essays on outstanding social figures and leading personalities in the field of today's progressive culture.

Speaking before the Second All-Union Congress of Writers, Sholokhov gave a classic definition of the Party spirit which characterises the Soviet artist. "Our malicious enemies abroad allege that we, Soviet writers, write at the bidding of the Party. The fact of the matter is rather different, since each one of us writes at the bidding of his own heart—and our hearts belong to the Party and the people, whom we serve with our art." The author's words to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union are not only full of deep feeling but also express the essence of the Soviet writer's position as a citizen: "We are all children of our great Communist Party. Each one of us, in thinking about the Party, always says mentally with enormous feeling: 'You are like a mother to us, you reared us, you steeled us, you are guiding us through life along the only true road.' "

Sholokhov's speech before the 22nd Congress of the Party dealt with the creative spirit of the artist and the relationship of the author to his characters in forthright and deeply-felt terms:

"An artist cannot be cold when he creates! You will not create a real literary work if you have the blood of a fish and a heart that's so fatty it won't stir up, and you'll never find a way to your readers' hearts. I want the blood to boil in the writer's veins when he is writing, I want his face to turn pale from his controlled hatred for the enemy when he writes about him, I want him to laugh and weep together with his characters, whom he loves and who are dear to him. Only thus will a real work of art and not a counterfeit be created."

The letter Sholokhov wrote to the magazine *Inostrannaya Literatura* met with a wide response among writers abroad. In it the writer suggested that the creation of a "round table" of writers throughout the entire world should be possible since, although they possess differing views, writers are united by a common urge to be useful.

The belief is growing in certain circles that the novel as a

genre and a literary form is on the point of extinction. While participating in a meeting of the European Committee of Writers Sholokhov spoke on this question, introducing into his speech a sharply polemical note, although formally expressing a deeply personal point of view. His skilfully worded, dignified speech showed up how absurd and contrived was the very notion of raising the question at all. He told his audience that he wished to reserve the right to speak again if anyone "starts planing the boards and knocking together a coffin to bury the novel in. The question of whether the novel is 'to be or not to be' simply does not arise for me, just as the question of whether to sow or not to sow his field does not arise for the peasant. In the case of the peasant the question may be put like this: 'How best to sow the field to reap a better harvest?' It is precisely the same in my case, and the question is: how to make my novel so good that it will really serve my people and my readers with honour?"

Sholokhov subsequently developed this view of the importance of the novel for himself as a writer, and as a genre of contemporary literature. In a *Pravda* interview given after learning he had been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for 1965, he said that while, naturally, he was pleased by the award, he wanted to make it quite clear that this was not the self-satisfaction of an individual, a professional writer, on receiving high international recognition of his work; the feeling that predominated in him was, rather, one of joy that he, albeit to a limited degree, was helping to glorify his country, the Party in whose ranks he had been more than half his life, and Soviet literature. He added that he was conscious of a feeling of gratification that "the novel genre, the very legitimacy of whose existence in the modern world has been questioned by certain literary figures, can be said to have been vindicated".

Later, during Nobel Week in Stockholm, he again returned to the question of the novel, emphasising the links between this genre and the realistic method of description. It was the novel, Sholokhov said, that enabled the writer to embrace the world of reality in the greatest possible breadth and depth and project upon his description of it his own attitude and that of people who shared his views on life and its pressing problems. The novel, Sholokhov said, could be said to predispose us towards striving for a more profound knowledge of the great life surrounding us, rather than towards attempts to present one's tiny "I" as the centre of the universe. By its very nature the genre offered the widest possible springboard for the realist.

Sholokhov's observations on "avantgarde" literature—that is, ultra-fashionable experimentation, primarily in the field of form—drew considerable public attention abroad. He countered this interpretation of the term, saying that in his own view the true avantgarde were the writers who disclosed in their works the new meaning with which life in our age was infused, and characteristic features of the present day. In the course of this speech Sholokhov also expressed his attitude towards a number of the most urgent questions posed by the development of literature today, including the principles of socialist realism, the writer's responsibility to the people, the place of the writer in the modern world and the great tasks facing literature and art.

In a speech to the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union he returned to these questions:

"I have had occasion more than once to discuss the writer's role in the life of society with writers, journalists, and newspaper correspondents at big, representative gatherings. In particular, this subject formed a significant part of my speech in Stockholm Town Hall during the Nobel Prize-giving ceremony last year. The audience was essentially different from the present one. And so the form in which I clothed my thoughts was correspondingly different. The form, mind you, but not the content.

"Wherever and in whatever language Communists speak, we always speak as Communists. There are some who may not like it, but they just have to lump it. Moreover, it is this very quality that is respected everywhere. Wherever a Soviet person makes a public speech he must speak as a Soviet patriot. In defining the role of the writer in the life of society we speak as Communists, as sons of our great Motherland, as citizens of a country which is building a communist society, as spokesmen for our Party's and our people's revolutionary-humanist views."

Speaking at the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Sholokhov said:

"The militant role played by Soviet literature and art in the world process of cultural development is determined, first of all, by the charge of communist ideology and partisanship carried in the best works of our artists."

Questions connected with the essence of socialist and revolutionary humanism have more than once come to the fore in Sholokhov's publicist writings in recent years. "The humanist is the man who fights, who helps to deflect the murderer's hand

and render harmless his evil will," he wrote in a letter to a writers' meeting in Baku in 1966. The concepts of humanism and love for man and mankind, he went on to say, tend to be interpreted very differently by different people, depending on which social forces they represent. Soviet writers, in accordance with their communist convictions, contend that a person who does no more than just pity the unfortunate victim of murder or robbery, and laments the fact that murder exists in the world, is no humanist. "Our strength, the strength of writers," the letter stresses, "lies in our passionate words which gain sway over minds and hearts, arouse human energies, strengthen the will and the determination to fight for man, for humanity, and for the light of freedom and brotherhood of nations, against the obscurity of imperialist barbarism."

In August, 1968 the participants in an international literary symposium in Tashkent received a telegram from Sholokhov urging men of letters to collaborate in the noble work of promoting peace and progress throughout the world.

Two years earlier a group of French tourists had met the writer in the offices of Novosti Press Agency in Moscow.

"I am deeply gratified by the development of broad co-operation between our countries," Sholokhov told them.

"I am a Don Cossack. A century and a half ago Don Cossacks were in Paris. Being viticulturists, they brought back seedlings and vines and the vines have taken root in the soil of the Don. The attitude of my fellow-countrymen towards you is a very warm one."

The tourists asked Sholokhov who was his favourite French author. This was his reply:

"It is always difficult to answer questions like that. One can talk very highly of the dead; of the living it is a bit embarrassing. Seriously, however, Russian literature, the great Russian literature, has gained much from contacts with you. This has been a mutual enrichment: Tolstoi and Stendhal are inseparable. Many things have happened to us in the course of history.... The last war, the war with nazi Germany, was a common war and the blood shed by French and Soviet people brought our nations really close together."

And what did Sholokhov see as the principal merit of Soviet literature?

"Truth. In the entire course of our Soviet history we have lived by faith and truth: our truth. I consider, without boasting, that we have accomplished a lot."

Sholokhov's Continuing and Profound Involvement in the Affairs of Youth

In Sholokhov's earlier publicist writings two basic fields of interest become immediately apparent: a wide range of vital contemporary concerns, including the urgent needs of our economy and of collective farmers; and questions of general culture, including literature and art. These two fields may be given the highly contingent definitions of "Life" and "The Writer". However, as we have seen, the war took Sholokhov's mind off these fundamental interests and started him on a series of articles in which the note of love or hate predominated: love for the socialist Motherland and hatred for its enemies. This was publicist material written in direct response to the events of the war years and later, with the ending of the war, to the struggle for peace throughout the whole world.

Sholokhov's postwar publicist writings have been characterised by a clear return to his earlier basic themes. A more and more sharply defined place has also come to be occupied by the subject of youth, of traditions handed on from one generation to the next and of the communist and patriotic education of young talent. In recent years, his personal contacts with the youth have been intensified, and articles addressed to the most varied sections of Soviet youth appear with growing frequency.

A brief survey of certain aspects of Sholokhov's literary activity in the 1920s and 1930s is highly instructive in this context. The satirical newspaper sketches "The Test", "Three" and "The Government Inspector", which represent his first published works, are all directly connected with the life of Soviet young people at the beginning of the 1920s.

By 1938 Sholokhov, then 33, had acquired world fame with the appearance of two volumes of stories, three books of *And Quiet Flows the Don* and the first book of *Virgin Soil Upturned*. He had the right and even to some extent the obligation to talk to young people of Komsomol age as an elder brother, as one who wished, if only humorously, to be young again:

"Dear Soviet boys and girls!

"The Komsomol is celebrating its twentieth birthday, and it's an occasion I cannot miss. An old man, walking past a crowd of merrymaking young people, will pause for a minute and as he listens to the tune played on the accordion and gazes smilingly at the happy young faces he seems to feel years younger himself. It's the same with me. I, too, feel younger just think-

ing of you, my dear readers, and also a little sad because I am already thirty-three and will look like a pretty old bird at your wonderful holiday."

Sholokhov devoted the most outstanding part of his speech to the 3rd Congress of Kazakhstan Writers to the problems of educating young writers and ensuring that they have the opportunity to work creatively. The author's words were imbued with a fatherly concern for those still taking their first steps; nevertheless, the views he expressed were in no way indulgent and many listeners were struck by the dominant image of his speech, characteristic of a writer whose work has always been distinguished by its soaring symbolism:

"I was once told how the golden eagle teaches its young to fly. He makes them take wing and without letting them come down forces them to climb higher and higher, driving them until they are utterly exhausted. Only thus will a young golden eagle learn to soar in the sky.... We have to use this method to teach our young writers, forcing them to climb higher and higher, so that eventually they'll shape into real eagles in literature and not wet crows or domestic hens. But the golden eagle does not break the wings of its young for not being able to or being afraid to climb to the required height at the first try. Nor do our critics have the right to break the budding writers' wings."

The message that Sholokhov sent to the 13th Congress of the YCL has a ring which would be not inappropriate to a prose poem; it was printed in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, and here is an extract from it:

"You are my own youth now past, you are the justified hopes of our country and our Party! Permit me on the eve of your congress to greet you, embrace you and wish you, the pride of my country, every success and happiness in your work, study and personal lives."

At the 3rd All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers Sholokhov spoke again in the concluding part of his speech of Soviet youth as the hope and pride of their country. Among young writers, he said, many genuine talents were to be found from whom works of significance might naturally be expected.

In view of the features specific to Sholokhov's publicist writings this book has been divided into three sections, entitled "Life", "The Writer" and "Young People".

The first section is naturally the most extensive, not only because of its greater thematic variety but because of the vital importance of the subjects raised. We concluded that little

benefit would be derived from subdividing this section further: for example, into "Creative Work" and "The War". The second section is also the second in scale. The third section includes articles, speeches and messages of greeting which were either directly addressed to or relating to young people.

By assigning the material to different categories we wanted to make it easier for the reader to use this book. However, Sholokhov often touches upon a series of questions relating to the most varied fields of human activity in the course of a single speech. An article may begin with a number of general problems, and end with a message addressed directly to the youth. Included in the third section are Sholokhov's speeches made at the Lenin Prize presentation, at the 22nd Party Congress, the 4th Congress of Soviet Writers, and the 3rd All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers as a significant part of each of these addresses is devoted to young people, their education, their duty to the people and to history, for they are the future of our Soviet state.

Part I

Life

From AN ADDRESS TO THE CONSTITUENCY OF THE NOVOCHERKASSK ELECTION DISTRICT

...The speeches of the candidates to the Supreme Soviet that have been published in our press all ring with a feeling of pride, because it is a proud thing to have the people place their trust in you. Comrades, the same feeling fills my being too. But in me this feeling of justifiable pride is mixed with personal joy because it is one of the Don election districts which has nominated me. I was born in the Don country, I grew up here, went to school and matured here as a man and a writer, and also as a member of our great Communist Party. And while being a devoted son of our great and mighty Motherland, I proudly state that I am also a patriot of my native Don region.

Comrades, yours is an old town and it has heard many a patriotic speech. In the years of the Civil War too. Ataman Krasnov and other political schemers also spoke here of their love for their Motherland and in the same breath invited the Germans to occupy our Don lands, and subsequently the so-called allies—the English and the French. They spoke of their patriotism and at the same time traded in the blood of the Cossacks, bartering it for weapons with which to fight against Soviet power and the Russian people.

History tests people by their deeds, and not their words. History tests the measure of a man's love for his country, and also what this love is worth. Krasnov and other scoundrels profaned and besmirched the concept of genuine patriotism. They traitorously misled the working Cossacks and got them involved in the Civil War.

Today, the entire multimillion population of the Soviet Union speaks of its love for the country, and everyone is ready to defend its boundaries with his very life. It is a man's sacred duty to love the country that has reared him with the tenderness of a fond mother. And our Motherland has the filial devotion of 170 million working people.

The Cossacks who had produced such great rebels against the autocracy as Razin and Pugachev were deceived by the generals in the years of the Revolution and dragged into the fratricidal war against the toiling Russian masses. The Cossacks understood their mistake, withdrew from the White counter-revolutionary movement, and are now building up their new and happier life under the guidance of the Bolshevik Party.

The efforts of the Bolshevik Party and the efforts of our multinational working people have transformed our poverty-stricken land into a wealthy state. We have built up heavy industry and socialist agriculture. With every day we are increasing our economic potential.

Look how the life of the Don Cossacks has changed in the Soviet years. In practically every family—not just in the *stanitsas** but at the lone farmsteads too—there are children who are getting a school education. Cossack collective farmers no longer want to bring up their sons as illiterate peasants capable only of working out in the fields. They want their sons to become engineers, Red Army officers, agronomists, doctors or teachers. A new Soviet Cossack intelligentsia is in the making. The Don country is taking on a new look.

We are boldly and confidently striding on towards our radiant future!

Long live the Communist Party!

Long live our great Soviet people and the working Don Cossacks!

1937

ON THE DON

The draftees together with the friends and relatives who were seeing them off to war were hastening to the *stanitsa* main square. Ahead of me ran two boys of around seven and ten. Their parents overtook me and left me behind. The father was a big, sturdy chap, a tractor driver by the look of him, dressed in neatly patched blue overalls and a well-laundered shirt. The mother was a young woman with a dark complexion, sternly compressed lips, and puffed-up eyelids that betrayed her recent tears. As she passed me, she said very softly for her husband alone to hear:

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* *Stanitsa*—a Cossack village.—*Tr.*

"There they come at us again. Why can't they let us live in peace? Give them what's coming to them, will you, Fedya?"

The bear-like Fedya wiped his sweating hands on a handkerchief that was black and greasy with machine oil, smiled down on his wife with an air of condescension and said in a deep rumble:

"You've been lecturing me all night, and you're still at it. Enough, now. I know my job, you don't have to teach it me. What you'd better do is tell your team leader when you return home that we'll skin him alive if he goes on stacking the hay the way we saw them doing as we came past Gniloi Log. Just tell him that, will you?"

The woman tried to remonstrate, but her husband silenced her with an angry gesture, and said in an even deeper rumble:

"Shut up for heavens' sake, you've said enough. Once we're lined up, we'll be told everything in a far better way than you can ever hope to put it."

* * *

The draftees were lined up in trim rows before the speakers' platform on the square. A huge crowd had gathered to see them off. The first to speak was Yakov Zemlyakov, a tall Cossack with a powerful chest.

"I was a gunner myself, a Red partisan, and I went right through the Civil War. My son is an artilleryman like myself, he's serving in the ranks of the Red Army. He fought in the Finnish war, was wounded and is now fighting the German nazis. I couldn't stomach the treachery of the Germans, so I handed in my application asking them to enlist me as a volunteer in the Red Army and put me in my son's unit so we could give hell to the nazi bastards together, just like we gave it to the White bastards twenty years ago. I want to go into battle as a Communist, and I'm asking the Party organisation to admit me as a candidate member."

Pravdenko, an old industrial worker, said in his turn:

"I have two sons in the Red Army. One is in the Air Force and the other in the infantry. I gave them my fatherly blessing to strike down the enemy without mercy till there's none left in the sky or on land. And if they need help, I'll take my rifle and have a go at them myself like in the old days."

* * *

The winter wheat, thick and bright green, rose in a wall as tall as a stand of young reeds. The rye was taller than an average man. Its taut bluish ears were pulled down by their own weight, and swung heavily in the wind.

A man on horseback appeared on the road. He turned into the rye field to give way to our car, and instantly vanished from view. We could not see the horse nor the man's white shirt, nothing but the crimson band on his Cossack cap which showed against the green like a flowering thistle.

We stopped the car, and the horseman emerged from the rye to speak to us.

"Look at it, isn't it a beauty this year?" he said, pointing at the rye. "And here it's threatened by that Hitler bastard, blast his soul! He'll be sorry he ever picked this fight. He sure will be sorry. Comrades, I haven't been home for two days, I've run out of tobacco, so give me a cigarette, will you? And tell me what's new at the front."

We told him what the latest communiques had said, and as he listened he kept stroking his greying sun-bleached whiskers.

"Our young people are putting up a jolly good fight, aren't they? And what will happen when we, the old hands who've fought in three wars, are called up? We'll slash those nazis right down to their navels, right down to where the midwives tied the bastards' chords. I'm telling you they'll be sorry!"

The Cossack dismounted, squatted on the ground and lit the cigarette we gave him, turning his back to the wind and never letting go of his bridle.

"How are things at your farm?" I asked him. "What do the older Cossacks have to say about this war?"

"Well, we figured on finishing with the haymaking and then reaping the rye and the wheat all right and proper. But if the Red Army needs us sooner, we're ready any time. The womenfolk will manage without us. You know that we've taught them how to handle tractors and combine harvesters just in case. Soviet power is wide awake too, it has no time for sleep," he said with a sly wink. "Sure it's more quietlike living in the steppe here, but then Cossacks never looked for a quiet life and never tried to hide behind anyone's back. We'll gladly fight this war. People are pretty mad at this Hitler bastard. What's the matter with him anyway, does he sicken for war or something?"

He smoked his cigarette in silence, casting sidelong glances at his peacefully grazing horse.

"When I heard about the war last Sunday, everything sort of turned over inside me," he resumed in a reflective tone. "I couldn't sleep that night, I lay thinking that last year we were attacked by the Colorado beetle, and this year by Hitler. There's always some trouble or other. And I was thinking, what kind of a lousy insect was he to jump on everyone and give no one any peace? And then I remembered the first German war where I fought till the end, and I remembered how I cut down the enemies.... I cut down eight of them with this hand here, and all during attack," he smiled shyly, and dropped his voice. "Nowadays I can tell about it outloud, but it was sort of awkward before.... I earned two St. George Crosses and three medals in that war. I didn't have them pinned on me for nothing, eh? I should say not. And so, I lay in my bed thinking of the last war, and suddenly I remembered reading in a newspaper that Hitler himself had been in that German war. And a sorrow so bitter gripped my heart, that I sat up in bed and said outloud: 'Dammit, why wasn't he one of those eight who came my way that time? I'd have swung my sword just once, and he'd have been in two halves.' The wife was awakened, and she asked me: 'What are you fretting about?' I said to her: 'About Hitler, be he thrice cursed! Sleep, Nastasya, this is all above your head.' "

He pinched out his cigarette and swung into the saddle.

"Well, never mind, he'll get what's coming to him, damn him." He gathered up the bridle and, turning to me, said gravely: "If you happen to be in Moscow, you tell them that the Don Cossacks of all ages are prepared to do their duty. Well, goodbye. I must hurry to the haymaking to help our female citizenry."

He spurred his horse and in a minute vanished from sight. Only the light puffs of dust kicked up by his horse's hooves on the loamy slope of the ravine floated on the wind and showed us the way he had gone.

* * *

That evening a group of farmers gathered on the porch of the Mokhovsky village Soviet. Kuznetsov, a middle-aged man with hollow cheeks, was speaking and I noticed his huge work-worn hands which lay serenely on his knees.

"... I was wounded when I fell into their hands. As soon as I was a bit better they put me to work. They harnessed eight of us into a plough, and made us plough their German soil for

them. After that they shifted me to the coal mines. The daily loading quota was eight tons of coal, and we barely did two. When we didn't do the quota we got beatings. They'd stand us up, facing the wall, and hit us on the back of the head so we'd smash our noses into the wall. After these beatings they'd lock us up in barbed wire cages. The cages were so low, you had to squat on your haunches. A couple of hours like that, and you had to be pulled out with a poker because you couldn't even crawl." Kuznetsov glanced at his listeners with gentle eyes, and continued in the same calm manner. "Take a look at me: I'm skinny and sick just now, but still I weigh 70 kilos, but in that prison camp I never weighed as much as 40 in all the two and a half years I was there. That's what they did to me."

After a momentary silence, he spoke again.

"Two of my sons are fighting the nazis just now. I reckon the time has come for me to settle accounts with them too. Only, begging your pardon, citizens, I'm not going to take them prisoner. I just can't."

A profound, alerted silence fell upon the listeners. Without lifting his eyes from his brown, twitching hands, Kuznetsov said in a softer voice:

"Begging your pardon, of course, citizens.... But they drained all the strength from my body, down to the last drop. And if I have to fight, I'll maybe take their privates prisoner, but their officers—never. I just can't, and that's all there is to it. The most terrible things of all I suffered at the hands of their gentlemen officers, so you must forgive me."

He stood up—a big, skinny man with eyes that suddenly looked brighter and younger with hatred.

* * *

On the second day of war, every man, woman and child at the Vashchayevsky collective farm turned out to work. Even the very old who had long been relieved came out to do their bit. The clearing of the threshing floor was left entirely to the old men and the old women. One ancient, really mouldy-looking from old age, was scraping at the floor with a shovel, sitting on a stool with his shaking legs spread wide apart.

"Why d'you work sitting, Grandad?" I asked him.

"My back won't bend, son, and I'm happier sitting down."

One of the old women there said to him: "Why don't you go home? We'll manage without you."

At this, the ancient raised his colourless, childlike eyes and said to her sharply:

"I have three grandsons fighting in this war, so I must help them in any way I can. And you're too young to teach me, woman. Wait till you're my age, then teach me all you want."

* * *

Two feelings live in the hearts of the Don Cossacks: love for their Motherland and hatred for the nazi invaders. Their love will live forever, but may their hatred last until the enemy has been routed completely.

Woe to those who have aroused this hatred and incited the cold fury of the people's wrath.

1941

COSSACK COLLECTIVE FARMS

Harvesting was in full swing on the boundless Don fields. Tractors rumbled and roared, and the thin blue smoke over the harvesters mixed with the whitish rye dust. The reapers whirred as they squashed the tall, thick rye with their wings. A peaceful scene by the look of it, but the grim stamp of war lay over everything. The people and the machines worked at a different pace, the rhythm was faster and more tense than before. Reddish-gold Don horses, brought here from the herds, neighed at the tethering posts in the village square. Sunburnt young horsemen wearing faded cavalry caps rode off to the enlistment stations, and the women who were binding the sheaves in the field, straightened up and waved to them for a long time, shouting: "Come back safe and sound, Cossacks! May luck be with you. Strike the nazi vipers dead! And give the Don's profound respects to Budyonny!"

Along the roads leading to the Grain Purveyance Stores came caravans of carts loaded high with sacks of newly reaped grain and majestically swaying mountains of excellent hay as green as spring onions and never touched by a drop of rain. The Red Army needed everything. And everything was being done for the Red Army. All the people's thoughts were there,

at the front. And all the hearts beat with the same wish: to break the nazi viper's spine as soon as possible.

An elderly farmer stood crushing a wheat ear in his hands and smiling.

"Nature herself is for us and against Hitler, let alone England and other clever nations who've become our allies. Look at the harvest this year, it's like in the fairy tale: the wheat stalks grow as thick as shafts, and potatoes are the size of cartwheels. The spring crops of wheat, the sunflowers and the millet wanted rain, and rain did fall just before reaping time! All these crops are a sight for sore eyes! Everything's to our good."

At the Bolshevistsky Put collective farm I spoke with a combine harvester operator, Pyotr Zelenkov. The very first hectare of rye he had harvested, he told me, yielded 2.8 tons of bunker weight, and, what is more, the grain had a relatively low moisture content and there was hardly any foreign matter. In places, the yield was as high as three or three and a half tons from a hectare.

Zelenkov unloaded his harvester as he went along, and so I had to wait some time before he stopped. During this brief rest, he climbed down from his machine, after glancing into the bunker, and walked a little distance away over the bristling stubble to have a smoke.

"Have you got someone to replace you in case you have to go to the front?" I asked him.

"Naturally."

"Who is it?"

"My wife."

"You're quite sure she can do your job?"

Zelenkov smiled all over his sunburnt face, the darker for the film of dust on it. The young woman working at the wheel leaned over the railing and said:

"I'm Zelenkov's wife. I'm doing this job temporarily, and last year I worked as combine operator and earned more than my husband."

Obviously, Zelenkov resented this reminder, and said rather grudgingly:

"If the worst comes to the worst, she can replace me, of course. But we've other plans: we want to go off to the front together. . . ."

Marina Zelenkova wasn't the sort to let her husband do all the talking, and so she finished what he had begun to say.

"We've no children, so we can easily go off together. And I

can drive a tank no worse than my husband, never you worry about that!"

Zelenkov hurried back to his combine, for he had no time to waste on chat. Of the farm's 540 hectares planted to rye 417 had already been harvested with reapers, and he was anxious to make up for lost time.

The simplest reapers were extensively used at most of the collective farms in Rostov Region that year. Without waiting for the grain to ripen sufficiently for reaping with combine harvesters, they started the job with plain reapers, greatly speeding up the harvesting process and saving a lot of fuel. This is what one of the men at the Stalinets collective farm had to say about the matter: "We stopped sweating once collective farms were started. Soviet power relieved us from back-breaking toil. And now these young fellows who work the reapers can't do a day's job without complaining of backache! Pampered, that's what they are. It was all very well in peacetime to have the tractors plough the fields for us, and the combine harvesters do the reaping and the threshing, but now that the nazis have started this fight with us it's no time to worry about your back. The way to work now is to get every joint in your body to do its bit, and save all the fuel you can for the Red Army which has more need of it than we do here. They'll put it to such good use that the nazis' joints will not only crackle but will start turning inside out."

More or less the same thing was said to me by Vassily Soldatov of the Twenty-Six Baku Commissars collective farm who had just done double his daily quota in stacking.

"We've got a hard and stubborn enemy, that's why we must also do a hard and stubborn job. And the quota ... we're set a quota here, but when we're sent to the front we'll go for the enemy without any quotas."

All the collective farms I visited impressed me with their excellent labour discipline and the people's awareness of their civic duty. Everyone came out to work—youngsters and old people, even those of them who had felt too old to do much work the year before. Everybody without exception worked to the best of his ability and with tremendous enthusiasm. Vassily Tselikov, team leader at the Bolshevist Road collective farm, said the following in response to the praise he heard from one of the district committee officials:

"We just can't do less than our best. The way I see it, we're defending the country with our toil just now, and when the time comes we'll defend it with weapons. And anyway, how

can we work half-heartedly when practically every family has someone fighting at the front? Myself, for instance, I have two sons, and both of them are away fighting. Alexei's a gunner, and Nikolai's a tankman. I'm too old to go, but I've enlisted in the home guard just the same. In the last German war I got wounded in the stomach. That German bullet's given me a lot of trouble, but I can still work.... If the need arises I'll join my sons in the fighting."

On learning that I was going to write an article for the *Krasnaya Zvezda* (Army paper) he said eagerly:

"Let my boys and all the fighters out there know through your paper that we won't fail them here, in the rear. Tell them to have no mercy on those nazis, let them make it so hot for them that they'll find nothing but their graves in our land."

When we arrived at the office of the Road the Socialism collective farm, we found no one there except an elderly bookkeeper. The chairman, he told us, was out in the field. There wasn't a soul about in the village: the entire population was busy reaping, cleaning the threshing floors or loading the grain.

"My son's at the western front," the bookkeeper told us, putting down his pen for a moment. "He was in active service for three years, he was commander of a gun crew. I would write and ask what kind of gun he had, and he'd write back and say: 'I'm fine, give my regards to the family, and don't ask me about guns, Dad, it's none of your business.' " The bookkeeper said this with a pleased smile. "Means he knows the regulations well. In the Civil War, I, too, had my share of fighting. I fought in the north, then I fought against the *basmach* bands, and every other brand of enemy too. I'm in the home guard now. There're about a hundred of us in the village. It's funny things are just now. There's any number of young men here, in the rear. When our hundred lines up, among us oldsters there's many a young fellow strong enough to haul a field gun. They've got the strength of stallions, they have. They're listed as volunteers, but for some reason they haven't been called up yet. It means we've got a huge army. It makes you feel good just thinking about it."

Team No. 2 was doing the harvesting with reapers. Two pairs of oxen were harnessed into each reaper, and though the wings had been raised as far as they would go, the going was hard because the rye had grown so high and thick. The women ox-drivers urged the animals on with shouts and whips, and the tough young Cossacks who wielded the pitchforks were

themselves driven so hard that they couldn't spare a second to wipe the sweat pouring down their faces. When at last they made a halt, I came up to the team and asked why they were racing the oxen at such a breakneck speed.

"These oxen are used to it, no harm will come to them," one of the Cossacks replied. "Our job's easier when we're going fast, and besides we've got to hurry, we might be sent to the front any day and it'll be pretty tough on the womenfolk to manage a crop like this. Why don't they draft me anyway, I'd like to know? They've drafted other chaps my age, and left me behind for some reason. Aren't I as good as the others, or what?"

The man's name was Pokusayev, a son of the local blacksmith. This hefty fellow with a barrel chest was in the artillery during his military service. From conversation with the others I learnt that they all had had military training in one arm of service or another, and I could well appreciate the impatience of these strong, healthy young men to go and give a good shellacking to the Germans, who were drunken with blood and cheap triumphs. It was an impatience shared by all the young Don Cossacks, the impatience of men whose forefathers had over the centuries watered the frontiers of our country with their blood defending it from its numerous enemies.

I remembered the words of Isai Markovich Yevlantyev, a man of eighty-three who now worked as watchman at the collective farm's threshing floor. It was a quiet night in July, with stars falling from the dark sky. He spoke in a soft, old man's voice.

"My grandfather fought against Napoleon, and he told me about it when I was just a kid. Before starting war against us, Napoleon called his generals together in the open field one fine day, and said to them: 'I have a mind to conquer Russia. What have you got to say to this, mister generals?' And these generals all said together: 'Can't be done, Your Majesty, it's a mighty powerful country, we'll never conquer it.' Then Napoleon pointed to the sky and asked: 'See that star up there?' 'No,' said the generals, 'we don't. You can't see it in daytime.' Napoleon told them: 'And I can see it. That star's a good omen.' And with that he moved his armies against us. He came in through a wide gate, and left through a narrow little door, just managing to squeeze through. Our people saw him off all the way to Paris. Seems to me the same stupid star appeared to this German commander, and when he's been fixed to leave the doorway will be made so narrow for him, I don't

know if he'll slip through or not. Let's hope to God he doesn't. So others should never try it again for now and forever."

1941

VILENESS

It has been reported from the army in the field: "Stiff fighting was going on near the village of Yelnya. The Germans had built fortifications in front of the houses, camouflaged them and returned fire for a long time. When our unit went into attack, the nazis drove all the women and children out of the village and placed them in front of their trenches. . . ."

This was done by soldiers of Hitler's army lauded as brave and honourable men by the nazi radio. "Honour" like theirs emanates a sickening stench of putrefaction. And one can't help thinking: if these soldiers survive won't they be ashamed to face their mothers, wives and sisters?

Nazi indoctrination must have been pretty thorough to have destroyed all human feeling in the soldiers, and to have transformed living creatures into automatons perpetrating inhuman, savage deeds.

I do not know what the nazis' act at Yelnya will be called in the language of Goebbels—military acumen or German resourcefulness—but in the language of all the world's civilised nations an action such as this, ignominious for a soldier, has been and always will be called vileness.

The reaction of everyone who hears about this new nazi atrocity will be a feeling of shame for the German people, loathing and hatred for those who ignominiously hide behind the unarmed civilian population.

The people of the Soviet Union and the Red Army are keeping count of the crimes perpetrated by the nazis. They shall pay with much blood for the blood shed by our people, and for their own dishonour.

1941

ON THE WAY TO THE FRONT

Armed with pencils, note-books and light machine guns, we rode in a car to the frontline, and on the road we overtook a great number of lorries carrying ammunition, provisions and

soldiers. All these lorries were so cleverly camouflaged with birch and spruce branches that looking down on the road from the rise one had the impression that shrubs and trees were migrating from the east to the west, moving in a fabulous procession. A whole forest seemed to be on the move.

The thunderous roar of artillery fire came louder and closer. We were nearing the front, but the way was still shown by Red Army traffic officers, waving their red or yellow flags, and the stream of lorries was advancing as rapidly along the road along the sides of which rumbled our powerful trailer tractors.

Having been warned that we might be attacked from the air any moment, my comrades and I took turns as lookouts, standing on the footboard, but no German planes appeared, and we rode on without mishap.

To me, an inhabitant of almost woodless steppe, the scenery in Smolensk Region seemed foreign, and I gazed at the landscape curiously as it unfolded before me. Pine woods rose in a wall on either side of the road, and from them came a breath of coolness and a strong pitchy smell. These woods were wrapped in twilight even in the middle of the day, and there was something sinister in their dusky silence, and this land covered with tall ferns and rotting stumps seemed hostile to me.

There were clearings, few and far between, overrun by young birches and asps, and suddenly a rowan bush covered with red berries would flash in the sun, and once again the forest would hem the road in on both sides. In the space between the treetops we would glimpse a hilly field with the rye or oats stamped out by countless soldiers' boots, and on a distant slope there would loom the charred remains of a village, burnt to the ground by the Germans.

We turned on to a country road and drove through a locality which had been in German hands until a few days ago, and which bore traces of recent fierce fighting. The land was pocked with ugly holes made by shells, mines and bombs. These holes were without number. The dead had not yet been buried, and we saw more and more dead men and dead horses. The sweetishly putrid smell made us hold our breath more and more often. Not far off the road lay the swollen carcass of a bay mare, and beside the dead mother lay a tiny dead colt with its fluffy broom of a tail flung back in quietude. This small victim looked so tragically unnecessary on that large battlefield.

The Germans' trenches and dugouts on the slope had been ploughed up by our shells. Split logs stuck from the ground,

and beside the parapets there were used cartridges, empty food cans, helmets, shapeless tatters of German greenish-grey uniforms, pieces of smashed weapons and intricately twisted telephone lines. A direct hit had blown up a machine-gun crew together with the machine gun. A crippled antitank gun could be seen in the door of the barn a little distance away from the ditches, completing this frightening scene of destruction caused by a squall of Soviet artillery fire.

The village over which the fighting had raged here for several days was on the other side of the hill. Before relinquishing it the Germans set fire to all the houses there. Our sappers were now building a bridge over the small river at the foot of the hill, and there was a smell of fresh pine shavings and river mud. The sappers had stripped down to their trousers, and in the sun their tanned bare backs shone with sweat and looked as smooth as the new boards they were laying down.

Very carefully we drove across the river over the timbers placed in a row. Tanks and tractors had raked the mud up on the banks with their tracks. We entered what was once the village. We saw the charred ruins of houses, blackened chimneys rising over piles of brick, charred household utensils, broken bits of pottery, a child's bedstead with warped metal rods.

A sunflower, the only one to miraculously survive, looked unnaturally, sacrilegiously beautiful against this sombre background as it turned its round face, framed in golden-yellow petals, to the sun. The flower stood in the midst of a stamped-out potato patch a little way from the foundation of a burnt-down house. Its leaves were slightly scorched, debris had piled up against the stalk, but it lived! It lived in spite of everything amid this general destruction and death, and this sunflower—swaying gently in the wind—seemed the only living being in this graveyard.

But it was not so. As we walked up the street we saw a yellow cat sitting on a black, charred wall. The cat was placidly washing itself and appeared to be quite unimpressed by the frightening happenings which had left it without home and master. However, on seeing us, the cat stared motionlessly for a second and then darted, flashing like a yellow lightning, into the ruins.

Two widowed hens were happily digging for food in the wrecked kitchen garden, but the moment they saw men in khaki they dashed away without a sound and instantly disappeared

from view. They had grown so wild that they would not let us come to within fifty yards of them.

"With their chicken brains they mistook us for Germans," said one of the men who had taken part in the battles recently fought here.

He went on to tell us that the Germans staged regular fowl hunts in the villages they occupied, firing their tommy guns at the geese and chickens. They slaughtered the cows and the hogs right in their sheds.

"These two hens have, no doubt, been under fire, so you mustn't mind their manners," the man said with a smile.

It is really touching how attached animals and birds become to their home. In the same village I saw a small flight of pigeons wheeling sorrowfully over the ruins of the church that had been demolished by German shells. They had probably lived in the belfry, and even though they had been deprived of shelter they still regarded this place as their home and were in no hurry to leave it. In one of the side streets, a small dog came crawling towards us, wagging its tail. It did not seem to have much self-respect, but it had mustered the courage to come here alone from the forest, for this is where it used to live. We startled a flock of sparrows in the hemp field on the edge of the village. They were not at all like those jolly, busily chirping sparrows we were used to in peacetime. These were silent, pitiful things. They circled over the devastation for a bit, then came back and settled on the stalks of the hemp, looking ruffled and forlorn.

The local peasant women, it must be said, felt as powerfully drawn to the place where they had spent their lives. The men had gone off to war, and when the Germans came the women and children hid away in the nearby forests. They now returned home, and wandered among the ruins with a lost air, digging in the debris for at least something from their household. For the night they went back to the forest where soldiers from reserve troops gave them bread and soup from the regimental pot, and the next morning they were back in the devastated villages again, circling like birds round their ravaged nests.

In the neighbouring village that had also been burnt to the ground, I saw children helping their mothers to rake the ashes in search of possessions that might have survived. I asked one of these peasant women how they were going to live now, and she replied:

"Chase away the blasted Germans as far as you can, and don't worry about us, we'll build us new houses, the village Soviet will help, we'll get by."

The red-rimmed eyes of the women and children and their wan faces, covered with a grey film from digging in the ashes, were not to be soon forgotten, and I was thinking: "How brutally and fiendishly the nazis must hate all living things to wipe peaceful towns and villages off the face of the earth and senselessly, to no purpose, destroy and set fire to everything."

We drove through yet another village, and once more there were forests all about us, then we caught a glimpse of unreaped wheat fields, a plot of flax with a few plants still wearing their blue flowers, and with a warning sign, nailed to a stick protruding from the flax, which said: "Mines!" and a sentry standing at the side of the road.

Upon retreating the Germans had mined the roads, the ground along the roads, the cars they abandoned, their trenches, and even the bodies of their dead soldiers. Our sappers were busy clearing the recaptured territory, we could see their bent, searching figures everywhere, and in the meantime cars and carts were driven very carefully over the danger zone, all but scraping against one another, while the sentries stationed all around watched hawk-eyed that no one should leave the road in the bad spots.

The roar of artillery battle mounted and swelled in volume, and now we could already make out the thundering of our Soviet heavy guns, and the sound fell like sweet music on our ears.

Before long we found ourselves in the disposition of one of our reserve units. The men had just been in battle, and yet someone was already playing a soft little tune on the accordion, and about twenty soldiers stood in a circle in front of the dugout laughing merrily as a young, sturdy private strutted about in the middle of the circle. As he twitched his broad shoulders with comic languor, his shirt stretched across his back and the whitish spots of dried sweat stood out distinctly on his shoulder blades. Slapping the legs of his tall boots with the palms of his big hands, he called out cheerily to his chum, a lanky, awkward soldier:

"Come on, come on, what're you scared of? You're a Ryazan man, I'm an Orel man, so let's see who's the better dancer."

But soon the brief twilight thickened to darkness and shadowed the forest, and quiet settled over the camp. At

daybreak the next day we were to go to Commander Kozlov's unit which was on the offensive.

1941

FIRST ENCOUNTERS

For the night, my three friends and I were given a tent, carefully camouflaged with young asp trees. Fir branches laid on the ground and covered with a cape were our bedding. We huddled close together for warmth, piled our greatcoats on top of us, and fell asleep.

At 11 p.m. the earth quaked under me, and through my sleep I heard the heaving roar of an explosion. I threw aside my greatcoat and sat up. In the stillness that followed I could clearly hear the pine trees rustling in the wind and the raindrops hitting the sides of the tent. The stillness did not last long. From somewhere far away in the west came the hollow sound of a shot, and then through the noise made by the rain I heard the low, moaning wail of a shell flying over us and immediately after came the thunderous burst.

"The Germans are firing from heavy guns," said the sleepy voice of the young, cheerful lieutenant who lay next to me. He glanced at the glowing face of his wrist-watch and continued: "They're shelling the road along which we drove here. It's harassing fire, they do it every night. My advice to you is take no notice and sleep. You've got to get used to it. The Germans are a punctual breed: they fire for exactly fifteen minutes, then they stop, and after an hour or an hour and a half they start amusing us again."

The lieutenant soon went back to his young, sound sleep, while I, hard though I tried, hadn't been able to get used to the too-near bursts of the German shells in those fifteen minutes. I didn't fall asleep until midnight, but when I did I slept like a log and no longer heard the Germans amusing us with the music of their heavy guns nor our batteries answering them. Just before daybreak I was awakened by the man on my left. He was frozen through because his greatcoat had slid off him and he shuddered so terribly, in great shudders like a dog, that I thought someone was shaking me awake. Yet he slept on throughout.

We emerged from the tent. Early-morning mist hung low over the forest. The soldiers, stripped to the waist, were rubbing themselves down with ice-cold water. Two of them, who

had already finished, were wrestling to get warm. They did it so earnestly that one of them had drops of sweat standing out on his forehead, and the other had become purple in his face and neck.

We had a filling army breakfast: hot soup with meat, canned pork, and tea. We thanked our kind hosts, and started off on our way.

Our heavy battery was changing its firing positions. Fast-moving prime movers rumbled past us drawing impressive-looking long-muzzled guns. We were compelled to turn off the road in order to give way to these monsters. After that we gave way to two ambulances carrying wounded soldiers, and a truck with wounded horses. I stood just off the road, and the boarded up side of the swaying truck sailed past just above me, it seemed, and close to me I saw a wounded horse's neck wet with dew and its huge, violet, weeping eye. These were the first victims of the night's fighting.

The staff of Commander Kozlov's unit was not far away. We left the car in a wooded hollow and started up the steep slope, densely overgrown with centuries-old pines. We were almost on the territory of the staff when suddenly the figure of a sentry appeared out of thin air on the path right before us, materialising as soundlessly and unexpectedly as an apparition. This apparition, however, was armed with an automatic rifle and wore a camouflage cape. He had apparently stepped out from behind a bush. Holding his rifle at the ready, he looked us over, asked to see our passes and subjected them to a very close scrutiny. I noticed that the bush behind him was stirring slightly, and through the leaves I saw the points of two bayonets aimed our way.

The ground here was cut up with slit trenches. We came upon many dugouts covered with branches. There were quite a few cars in the forest, but they were so cleverly camouflaged that one could not see them at all until one walked right into them. Sappers were at work all over the place, hammering, sawing, and digging new shelters. The forest smelt of pine needles and wet clay.

A squat captain met us at the door of the staff dugout. He told us that General Kozlov and the chief of staff were busy at the moment, and politely invited us into the commander's dugout next door.

We went down some broad steps, entered a narrow passage and opened the door before us. This was not a dugout in the usual meaning of the word. It was a spacious peasant cottage

sunk by magic deep into the ground. To make the illusion complete there ought to have been a big Russian stove, but for practical purposes the iron stove they had did just as well. The large room had a freshly scrubbed wooden floor, the walls were panelled with new boards, and the ceiling was dazzlingly clean. An electric lamp burnt brightly above the table. There was a smell of pine needles and, one thought, freshly baked bread. We gazed about this underground dwelling with admiration, and the captain said smiling:

"Our General is a very practical person. There's an abandoned village not far from here which the Germans shell regularly every day and they've razed half of it to the ground already. The General ordered the sappers to bring the remaining cottages over here, since they were doomed anyway. The sappers did the job in two days, and here we are."

Artillery commander Colonel Grositsky, an energetic, jovial man, came into the room and, the introductions over, told us about the situation on this section of the front.

"We're pressing the enemy hard. At noon today we shall start preparatory bombardment and then the offensive. The height which you saw on your way here used to be called Kudryavaya (Curly.—*Tr.*) hill, and now it's been renamed Lysaya hill (Bald.—*Tr.*). It has really turned bald from our artillery fire, but there was a time when it was covered with forest. The leaflets which the Germans are throwing down are proof enough of the effectiveness of this fire, they say: 'Soviet infantryman, surrender! Soviet gunner, don't let us catch you.' We're not letting them catch us, you know, we try to let them catch it instead. And we're doing alright, too. We drop our observers at the frontline, where our infantry is, and they do the spotting. The team work's excellent: German guns, mortars and dugouts go up in the air one after the other! They used to roof their dugouts with three layers of logs, and now they have six or seven, they're burrowing deeper into the ground, but this doesn't help them much, we dig them out of there with our shells all the same."

The battle which began early that morning with a lazy exchange of fire was gathering momentum. The Colonel listened to the increasing bursts of German shells, and went to the telephone. He spoke briefly, in a low voice. Immediately after, the hitherto silent nearby battery went into action, and the Germans' mortar fire noticeably abated.

The Colonel did not think much of the German artillery. He told us:

"They're poor shots, they've no system. If they've no spotting plane over the battlefield, they can't do a thing. Hear those bursts on the left? They're shelling the section where our battery was last night. We shifted it before light, so they're firing at nothing, and will go on firing for a long time, and afterwards they'll probably report to their staff that their guns had destroyed the Soviet howitzer battery."

It was not long before General Kozlov appeared. The General, who had fought in five wars, was a middle-aged man with grey temples and unhurried movements. He sat down wearily on a bench and placed his large, beefy hands on the map spread out on the table before him.

"Did you have tea?" he asked. "No? Bad show. Give us some tea, and be quick about it."

The General, who was the son of a peasant, had been in military service since the age of eighteen. He had a common Russian face, a slightly uptilted nose, and mockingly intelligent blue eyes.

"The German infantry is considerably inferior to what it was in 1914," he spoke unhurriedly. "They run behind the tanks, but if there are no tanks they take up defense and stay where they are. They won't take on a bayonet attack, they're scared. The Finns were better fighters. They're nervous wrecks, that's what the German soldiers have become. You can see it from their letters home, from their diaries, and when you're speaking with the prisoners too. It makes you sick. They cry, shiver and grovel. No, they're not the soldiers they were in the last war, not by a long shot!"

The General told us some interesting episodes, and then tea was served by the cook Anatoly Nedzelsky.

"Why don't you treat the guests to some of your jam?" the General asked him.

The tall stalwart, with the white cook's cap pushed back at a reckless angle, flew to do the General's bidding and was back in a flash with a pot of jam.

"We made it ourselves," he said proudly. "There is a lot of cranberries in the forest, we picked them in our spare time, and now we've plenty of fresh jam."

The cook, like his General, was a practical sort, and his jam was really excellent. In the course of conversation we learnt about Nedzelsky's other qualities as well. The other day the General and a group of officers were at the frontline positions, and Nedzelsky, who had stayed behind at staff headquarters, decided to bring them some hot dinner when the hour for it

arrived. He harnessed a horse into a two-wheeled cart and set off. A German shell exploded in the middle of the road and killed the horse, but this misfortune did not daunt the young brave. Filling a pail and a thermos flask with the hot soup, he crawled along under fierce enemy fire and safely delivered the food to his hungry General and his officers.

When the fighting got hot, Nedzelsky also joined in, running to the trenches with his rifle and some hand grenades, and leaving the staff scribe to watch the dinner and see to it that the steaks did not get burnt. In such emergencies the General's dinner was not as good as usual, but his cook's patriotic impulse deserved respect, and respected it was. Once, at the risk of his life, Nedzelsky carried a wounded lieutenant to safety from the field of battle, and he will certainly perform more feats before the war is over. Anatoly Nedzelsky—the cook and the soldier—thus lived a double life. From the trenches he'd rush back to his kitchen and, more likely than not, would find that the soup had boiled away and the meat had burnt to the blackness of anthracite. Or again, he would be making soup, and suddenly through the thunder of explosions he'd hear a mighty, rolling Russian "Hurrah!" and then in his distress that he wasn't taking part in the attack where he belonged heart and soul, he'd absently pour sugar instead of salt into the pot, and grind almonds instead of pepper. That's how I imagine it. in any case. But, after all, it's a private matter concerning the General and his cook only, and they know best, of course.

1941

RED ARMY MEN

General Kozlov said goodbye to us and went off to one of his units in order to watch the offensive on the spot. We wished him luck, but even without our wishes it seemed pretty certain that luck would not turn against this peasant-general, a prudent, experienced man who had the shrewdness of a peasant and the doggedness of a soldier.

I came out of the dugout. Our preparatory bombardment was to start in fifteen minutes. I was introduced to Second Lt. Naumov who had just come from the frontline. He'd had to crawl under enemy fire for half a kilometre or so, and his sleeves, chest and knees were stained with the bright green of crushed grass. He had brushed off the road dust, however, and

stood before me—a calm, smiling young officer with a smart military bearing. He was 27 years old, and until two years ago he was a schoolteacher. He's been in the fighting from the very first days of war. His face was round, the cheeks covered with a young, golden fuzz, his grey eyes were kind, and his eyebrows had become faded in the sun. A sweet, shy smile was on his lips all the time. I found myself thinking that this young, modest teacher must have been very popular with his pupils, and that probably he was now as popular with the men to whom he explained their war tasks with the same thoroughness and patience with which he once explained arithmetic problems to his pupils. I noticed with astonishment that there was plenty of grey in his cropped fair hair where it showed under his helmet. I asked him if the war was responsible for this premature grey, and he replied with a smile that he was already grey when he joined up and that no shocks could affect the colour of his hair now.

We sat down on the earthen bank of the dugout for a chat, but the conversation flagged. My interlocutor did not like to talk about himself, and he only livened up when I asked him about his comrades. He spoke with admiration of his friend Lt. Anashkin who was killed in recent battle. Every now and again he broke off his story to listen to our guns and the bursts of German shells somewhere behind the territory of the staff. When I tried to bring the conversation round to himself, he grimaced and said reluctantly:

"Actually, there's nothing to tell. Our antitank battery is doing a good job. We've crippled a lot of German tanks. I do what everybody does, but Anashkin—that was really something! Near the village of Luchki we went into attack in the middle of the night, and at daybreak we discovered that we had five German tanks against us. Four were running about the field, and the fifth had no more fuel and stood still. We opened fire and got all five. The Germans were firing their mortar guns, and we just could not get at their weapon emplacements. Our infantry dropped flat, and then Anashkin and Shkalev, our scout, crept to one of the German tanks and climbed in. Anashkin took a look round and saw the German mortar battery. The gun on the tank was in order, a 76mm gun it was, and there were enough shells. He trained this German gun on the Germans, smashed their mortar battery, and then started on their infantry. Anashkin was killed together with the whole crew when they were moving their gun to a new firing position."

Naumov's grey eyes darkened, and his lips twitched slightly. The second time I saw his face change was when I thoughtlessly asked him if he often got letters from home. Once again his eyes darkened, and his lips twitched.

"I wrote my wife six letters in the last three weeks, and never got an answer," he said and, smiling shyly, asked: "When you're back in Moscow would you please get in touch with my wife and tell her that I'm all right and also give her my new address? You see, our unit has changed its postal number, so maybe that's why I haven't been getting her letters."

I gladly agreed to carry out his request. Soon our conversation was cut short because our preparatory bombardment had begun. The earth shook from the barrage, and the single shots and salvoes merged into a deafening, continuous roar. The Germans intensified their return fire, and the bursts of their heavy shells sounded nearer and nearer. We went down into the dugout, but came up again in a matter of minutes. The sappers, I was amazed to see, had not suspended work on the dugout they were building. One of them, a middle-aged man with ginger whiskers that stuck out like a tomcat's, was matter-of-factly examining the huge pine that had just been felled, rapping the trunk with his axe, while the others were busy with their shovels and picks and the heap of bright yellow clay on which they threw the earth they dug up grew into a regular mountain right before our eyes.

One of the officers said to me, indicating with a nod a soldier who lay on the grass not far away: "Would you like to have a talk with one of our best scouts? He's been behind enemy lines, he only came back this morning and brought some very important information."

I said I'd be delighted, and the officer yelled in order to be heard above the roar of the cannonade: "Comrade Belov!"

The man sprang to his feet in a quick, smooth movement, and came towards us, pulling his tunic straight as he walked.

Suddenly there was silence. The officer glanced at his watch, sighed and said: "Our men have gone into attack now."

There was something feline in Belov's gliding walk. I noticed that not a twig cracked under his feet, and yet the ground was cluttered with pine branches and twigs. He seemed to be walking on sand for all the noise his footfall made. It was much later when I learnt that he hailed from one of the villages near Murom—a country of impenetrable forests—that I understood how he got the hunter's knack of walking on soft, noiseless feet not to scare off game.

The same thing happened as in the conversation I had with Second Lt. Naumov. This man, too, was reluctant to talk about himself, yet eagerly praised his comrades. Modesty, I discovered, is an essential quality of all heroes, fearlessly fighting for their Motherland.

Belov studied me closely with his sharp brown eyes for quite a long moment.

"It's the first time I'm seeing a writer in the flesh," he said with a grin. "I've read your books, I've seen portraits of different writers, but I've never seen a live writer before."

As curiously I studied this exceptionally brave and resourceful man who had been behind enemy lines sixteen times and who risked his life every day. He was also the first scout I had ever met.

He was slightly round-shouldered and had long arms. He smiled rarely, but when he did his whole face lit up like a child's, and one could see his white teeth, set fairly wide apart. His chocolate-coloured eyes were perpetually screwed up. Like a night bird he seemed to fear daylight and screened his eyes with his thick eyelashes. I had a feeling he could see perfectly in the dark. I found myself staring at the palms of his hands: they were completely covered with fresh and healed abrasions. I guessed that he got his hands skinned because he so often had to crawl on the ground. His shirt and trousers were stained with green, but his natural camouflage was so good that if he were to lie prone on autumn faded green grass you would not see him five feet away. He took his time telling his story, and as he talked he kept biting at a blade of grass with his strong teeth.

"I was a machine-gunner at first. Our platoon was cut off by the Germans. They were everywhere, wherever we tried to go. A friend of mine, another gunner, offered to go and scout. I went with him. We crawled to the motor road and lay low near a bridge. We lay there for a long time. We counted the German lorries that passed us, and wrote down what cargo they carried. Then a passenger car came along and stopped near the bridge. A German officer climbed out, a tall chap in a tall cap. He got the field telephone, climbed under his car, and lay there talking into the phone. He had two soldiers keeping watch, and there was the driver at the wheel of the car. My friend—a devil of a fellow—winked at me and got out a hand grenade. I did the same. We rose on our elbows and both threw at the same time. We killed all the four Germans and wrecked the car. We rushed to the dead men, pulled the map

case off the officer's shoulder, took out a map with some sort of signs on it, collected some of their weapons, and just then we heard a motorbike. We dropped into the ditch again. The moment the German on that motorbike slowed down near the wrecked car we threw a third grenade. It killed the German, the motorbike turned over twice and the engine was silenced. I ran to the motorbike—it was as good as new. My friend was a heroic fellow but he didn't know how to drive a motorbike. I didn't either, but it was a pity leaving it there. So we wheeled it along," Belov grinned at the memory. "My arms were all numb as I wheeled that damned thing through the forest, but we brought it to our people safely anyway. We broke out of encirclement the next day, and took the motorbike along. Our signaller rides it now, and does he send the dust flying! I thought scouting was great fun, and so I asked my company commander to transfer me to the scouts. I've been over to visit the Germans lots of times. Sometimes you walk, sometimes you crawl on your belly, and there are also times when you hug the ground and lie there without stirring for several hours running. It's all in the day's work for us. We mostly go out in the night to try and nose out where the Germans have their ammunition stores, radio stations, airfields, and other such stuff."

I asked him to tell me about his last visit to the Germans.

"There's nothing interesting to tell, Comrade writer," he said. "A whole platoon of us went the day before yesterday. We crawled over some German trenches, and quietly knifed one German so he couldn't raise an alarm. After that we walked for a long time through the forest. Our orders were to blow up a bridge which the Germans had just built. That was about forty kilometres into enemy country. We had some other things to find out besides. We covered about eighteen kilometres that night, and then my platoon commander sent me back with a message. I went along a narrow path, and suddenly I saw the fresh imprints of a horse's hooves. I took a close look and saw that they were German horseshoes, not ours. Next I saw footprints: four men must have walked behind that horse. One of them had a limp in his right leg. The prints were recent. I caught up with the Germans, followed them for a long time, and then made a detour around them and continued on my own way. I could have shot them all, but I had no right to get into a fight, I had that envelope on me and couldn't risk losing that. I waited for nightfall quite near the German trenches, and was over on our side before morning. That's all."

He fell silent. With his eyes wrinkled up against the light he sat deep in thought, twirling a dry blade of grass in his fingers, and then, speaking as though in answer to his own thoughts, said:

"What I think, Comrade writer, is that we'll beat the Germans. It takes a lot to make our people angry, they're not really angry yet, but once they get properly angry, it'll be all up with the Germans. We'll squash them, that's for sure."

As we walked to the car, we caught up with a wounded soldier. He was shuffling to the ambulance, swaying drunkenly every few steps. His head was bandaged, but the blood seeped through the dressing. There were trickles of dried blood on the lapels and skirts of his greatcoat, and even on his boots. There was blood on his hands and his sleeves up to the elbow, and his face had that peculiar chalky transparency which means a large loss of blood.

We wanted to help him to the ambulance, but he declined and said he'd get there himself. He told us he had been wounded an hour ago. His head was bandaged down to the eyes, and he had to raise it high in order to see who he was talking to.

"A shell splinter wounded me. My helmet saved me, else my head would have been blown to bits," he said in a low voice and even attempted to smile with his blue, bloodless lips. "That splinter pierced the helmet, I clutched my head with my hands, and the blood came pouring." He peered at his hands, and dropped his voice even lower: "I gave my rifle, my cartridges and two hand grenades to a friend, and crawled to the casualty station." Suddenly he turned his face to the west whence came the noise of shell bursts and the rattle of machine-gun fire, and said in a strong, loud and firm voice: "I'll come back. They'll fix me up a bit, and I'll come back to my company. I've an account to square with the Germans."

His head was raised high, his eyes glinted from under the bandage, and his simple words sounded as a solemn oath.

We entered the forest. There were auburn leaves on the ground—the first sign of approaching autumn. These leaves looked like bloodstains, like wounds on the body of my Motherland, desecrated by the German invaders.

"What remarkable people there are in the Red Army!" one of my companions said in a low voice. "Take Major Voitsekhovsky who died like a hero a short while ago. He was in the attic of one of the buildings not far from here, correcting the fire of our guns. Sixteen German tanks tore into the village

and stopped near this building. Without a moment's hesitation he picked up his telephone and ordered the gunners: 'Aim at me, quick. German tanks here.' He insistently repeated his order. All the sixteen tanks were destroyed, the threat to our defence was averted."

We walked on in silence. Each one was busy with his own thoughts, but all of us emerged from that forest feeling confident that whatever the trials that might beset our country, it was unconquerable. It was unconquerable because millions of ordinary, modest and courageous people had stood up in its defence, and they would not spare their blood nor even life itself in the struggle against the brown-shirted enemy.

1941

PRISONERS-OF-WAR

Their battalion was put on the train in Paris and sent east. They had with them the things they had looted in France, French wines and French cars.

For lack of petrol their cars had to be left behind in Minsk, and from there to the front they were marched on foot. Intoxicated with the victory of German arms and with French wine, they moved along the dusty roads of Byelorussia with the sleeves of their tunics rolled up to the elbow and the collars unbuttoned. Their helmets were strapped to their belts, and their uncovered, sweaty heads were opened to the gentle sunlight and the warm wind of this alien country. With a little wine still swilling in their flasks they walked at a brisk step through the charred skeletons of Soviet villages and hollered a dirty song about Jeanne, the beautiful French girl, who had her first look at real soldiers and her first experience of real men only when the Germans entered Paris.

And then life became less rosy. Day and night, on the march and at halts, they were harassed by partisans. Within six days the battalion lost close on forty men—killed and wounded. The messenger sent to headquarters on a motorcycle vanished into thin air. So did six privates and one lance corporal. These seven had gone to the nearest village to procure some food for the battalion and never came back. The song about the beautiful French girl who was left well-pleased with the Germans sounded less and less often now. People here were not well-pleased with the Germans. As the battalion entered the ravaged

villages, the inhabitants took to the forests, and those who had tarried in their dwellings morosely stared at their feet not to betray to the Germans the hatred smouldering in their eyes. There was more hatred than fear in the eyes of these men and women.

* * *

Lance Corporal Fritz Berkmann, if he was to be believed, had never taken part in any punitive operations against the civilian population. He thought himself a cultured, decent person who was, naturally, against all unnecessary cruelty. And so, when his tipsy soldiers cracking dirty jokes and laughing, dragged a young peasant woman into the barn, he left the yard so as not to hear her screams. The woman was young and strong. She put up a mighty resistance, and as a result one of the soldiers lost an eye. Still, the remainder had their way with her. After they had raped her, the one-eyed soldier killed her. Lance Corporal Berkmann was terribly angry when he heard about it. He would never have done anything so vile himself. He had a wife and two children at home in Nuremberg, and he wouldn't like to have anything like this happen to *his* wife. Oh well, he could not answer for the actions of beasts who, unfortunately, did exist in the Reich army. When he reported on the happening to his lieutenant, the man shrugged—c'est la guerre!—and told Berkmann not to bother him with trifles.

The battalion was hurled into battle straight from the march. They did not leave the trenches for 26 days. Only 38 men survived from Berkmann's company of 170. The soldiers were discouraged by such enormous losses. That wasn't how they pictured the war with the Russians when they rode in the train from France, hollering their songs. Their officers had told them that they'd run through Russia as a knife runs through butter. As easily as that. All this turned out to be plain, boastful rubbish, and many of the officers who told them those things would never tell them anything again: the bullets of Russian snipers and the fragments of Russian shells had passed through their bodies really as easily as a knife passes through butter.

*

Berkmann was taken prisoner this morning during our attack. Our soldiers blindfolded him with metres of gauze before bringing him into our dugout.

"Are you going to shoot me?" Berkmann asked in a quavering voice.

The soldiers did not know German, and so they did not reply.

Berkmann entered the dugout weak-kneed from fear. When the blindfold was removed and he saw before him several people sitting calmly round a table, he drew a wheezy sigh of such profound relief that I felt quite ill at ease.

"I thought they were going to shoot me," he mumbled in explanation of his involuntary sigh, and instantly stood at attention.

He was invited to take a seat. He sank onto a chair, placing his hands on his knees.

There he sat before us, this mercenary of nazi Germany, giving detailed answers to all our questions.

He still could not recover from his fear. His cheek twitched, and the hands trembled on his knees. With all his might he tried to master his nervousness and not let us see how he was shaking, but with little success. It was only after he had greedily smoked the cigarette he was offered that he recovered his balance.

He had curly hair and stupid blue eyes, set wide apart. He was very hungry, this unquestionable Aryan, and the war had left him very much the worse for wear. Their daily ration consisted of three cigarettes, a little bread and a half-messtin of hot soup. It was not always possible to deliver hot food to the trenches, and the Germans had to go hungry.

What did he think about the outcome of the war with Soviet Russia? He thought it a hopeless venture. The Führer had made a mistake to attack Russia. It was a very big bite, too much for Germany to swallow. Here, the prisoner said, he had a chance to freely speak his mind, which he could never do in his company as members of the nazi party spied on the men. Every thoughtlessly spoken word might spell death by shooting. His own personal opinion was that the thing to do was to defeat England, take away her colonies, and be finished with the war.

His impressions of occupied Soviet territory boiled down to the following: there was not much food. The advanced detachments of the German army had devoured everything the population had. It was a stroke of luck finding a chicken anywhere now. He spoke almost with hatred of their tank divisions and motorised units. "They simply clean out the villages, the pigs. Coming behind them is like marching across a desert."

Talking with Lance Corporal Berkmann was very trying indeed. The air in the stuffy dugout felt even more oppressive from the cynical utterances of this marauder in soldier's uniform, a hysterically garrulous, stupid fool. We wanted to go out into the fresh air, and so we cut the conversation short.

In conclusion, he rose to his feet and, standing at attention, said that at the interrogation two hours ago he had honestly told the Soviet commander of the position and strength of his battalion, also the location of the staff and the ammunition dump. He told all he knew as he was a convinced enemy of war against Russia. When checked, his information would certainly be confirmed, and so he begged to be given a chance to let his wife know that he was a prisoner-of-war, and also, if at all possible, to be fed once more since the last meal he had was a full seven hours ago.

* * *

And now we had before us a youth of twenty with sleek hair, blue pimples on his face, and thievishly darting eyes. He was a member of the German National-Socialist Party. A tank officer. He had fought in France, Yugoslavia and Greece. The day before a Soviet soldier had blasted his tank with a bunch of hand grenades. He had jumped out of the tank and fired back. Four Soviet bullets hit him, but the wounds were not grave. Now and then he winced from pain, but on the whole he behaved with brazen, put-on courage. He answered our questions without raising his eyes. He flatly refused to reply to some questions, but then he held forth with great readiness and in well-memorised sentences on the supremacy of the German nation and the inferiority of the French, British and Slavs. No, this was not a human being speaking, this was an underdone pie with a stinking stuffing. Not a thought to call his own, not a hint of any spiritual interests. We asked him if he knew Pushkin and Shakespeare. He wrinkled his forehead in thought.

"Who are they?" he asked, and when we told him he replied with a thin-lipped contemptuous smirk: "I don't know them, and I don't want to know them. I have no need of them."

He was certain that Germany would win the war. With dumb, idiotic doggedness he reiterated:

"Before winter our army will finish with you and then it

will descend on England with all its might. England must perish."

"But what if Russia and England defeat Germany?"

"Impossible. The Führer has told us that we shall win," he replied, staring stonily at his toes. His answers were those of a dull pupil who has learnt the words by heart but will not trouble himself with unnecessary reflections. There was something false, unbelievably ugly in this youth, and the only really sincere thing he said was: "I'm sorry my military career has been cut short."

This young wretch, hopelessly corrupted by Hitler's propaganda, was not tired of killing people. He has just developed a taste for murder, he has not yet smelt enough of his victims' blood, and here he was—a prisoner. He stood before us, a killer forever rendered harmless, watching us with the hunted look of a trapped, bloodthirsty polecat, and his nostrils dilated from blind hatred for us.

Six German privates emerged from the tent under guard of one Soviet soldier, and squatted on the ground, carpeted with pine needles. These prisoners had just been captured. Their uniform coats were dirty and roughly mended; one of them had a length of wire wound round his instep to hold the flapping sole of his boot. They had not washed for six days. Our artillery had not given them the chance. Their glum faces were covered with a crust of dried dirt. They had become infested with lice in the trenches, and unashamedly scratched their heads with grimy fingers.

Only one of the six—a handsome dark chap—wore a pleased smile and, turning to me, said:

"The war's well over for me. I'm glad that I was so fortunately taken prisoner."

Messtins filled with steaming cabbage soup were brought. The prisoners pounced on the food like hungry beasts and, champing noisily, gulped down the soup greedily, hardly chewing the meat, and burning their mouths. They were two spoons short. Without waiting for the spoons to come the two Germans fished the cabbage and potatoes out of the messtins with their dirty hands, stuffed the food into their mouths and, throwing back their heads, screwed up their eyes from sheer bliss.

Their hunger appeased, they got up, feeling heavy and sleepy.

"Thanks," said a stocky lance corporal, suppressing a burp. "Thanks a lot. I don't remember when we last had such a filling meal."

The interpreter told us that the seventh prisoner had remained in the tent, refusing to eat. We went into the tent. A middle-aged, very skinny and long-unshaven German soldier rose to his feet at our entrance, and dropped his big, calloused hands down the sides of his body. We asked him why he was refusing to eat.

"I'm a peasant, I was mobilised in July," he replied in a nervously quavering voice. "In these two months of war, I've seen all I want of the destruction caused by our army, I've seen abandoned fields, and all that we have done on our drive east.... I've lost sleep, I can't eat. I know that practically the whole of Europe has also been ravaged like this, and I know that Hitler will have to pay terrible retribution for everything. And not Hitler alone, the damned cur, but the whole German nation will have to pay. D'you see what I mean?"

He turned away and remained silent for a long time. Oh well, this was a welcome sort of brooding. The sooner the German soldiers became aware of the full weight of their responsibility and the inevitable retribution, the sooner would democracy triumph over nazism that has gone mad.

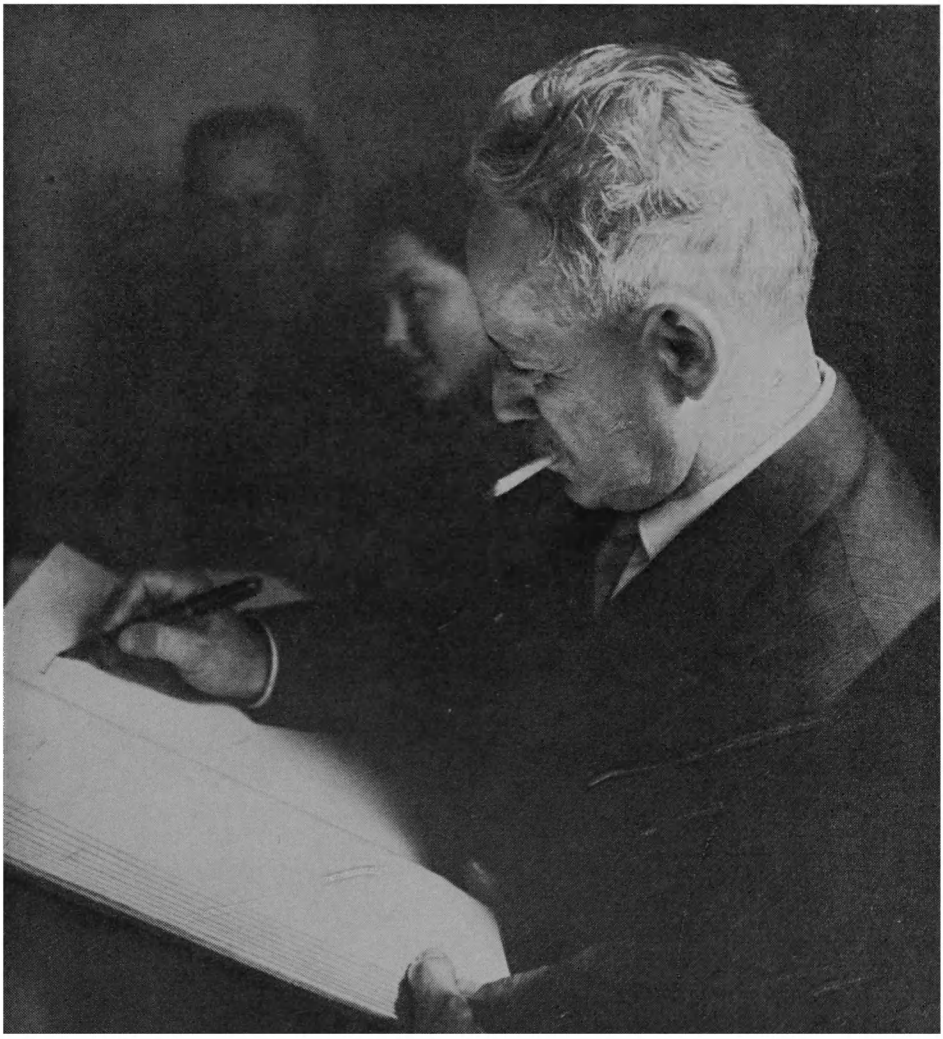
1941

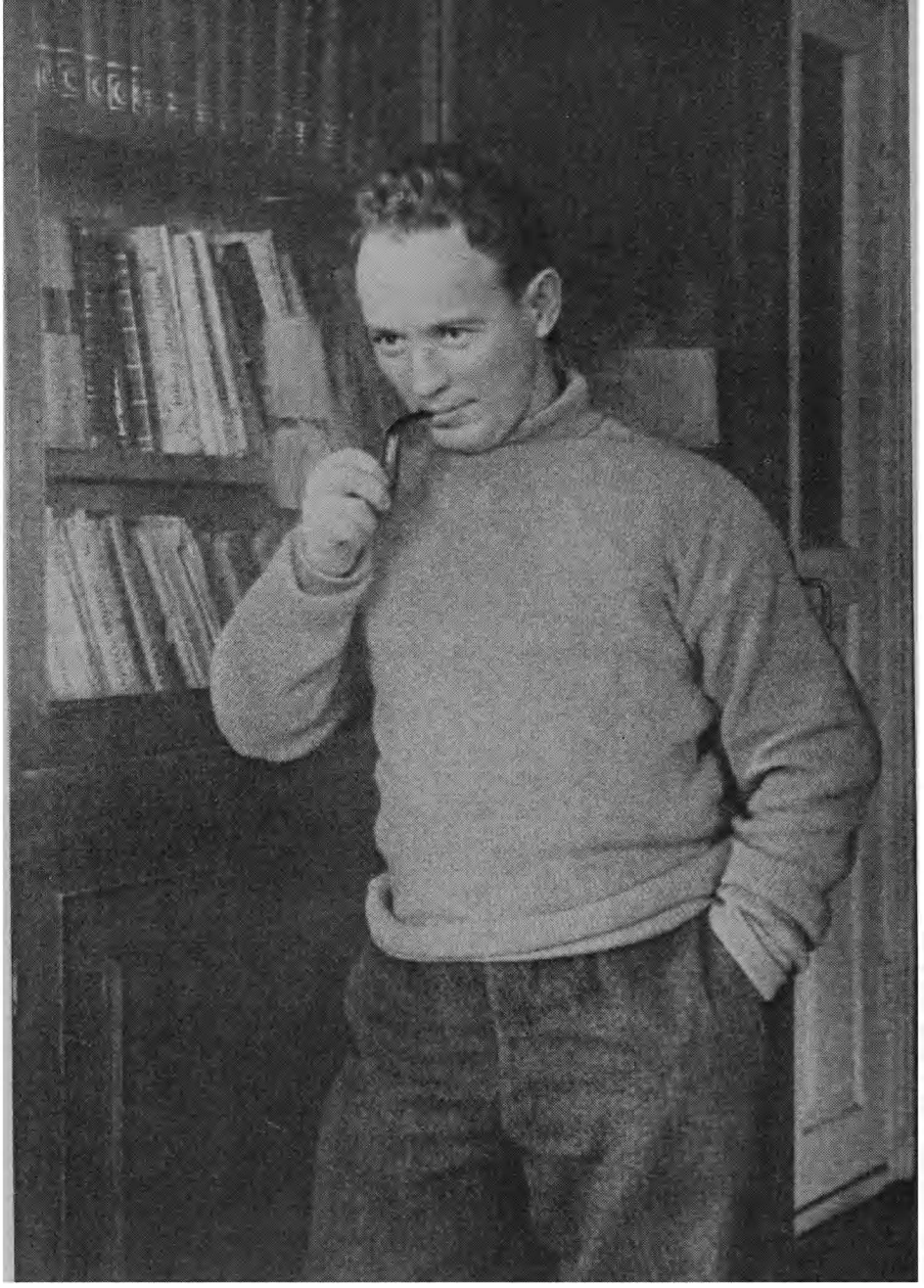
A LETTER TO LENINGRADERS

My Leningrad comrades!

We know how hard it is for you to live, work and fight while surrounded by the enemy. People remember you everywhere—on every front and in the rear. The steel founder in the far-off Urals, looking at a molten stream of metal, thinks about you and works without letup to speed the hour of your liberation; the man on the battlelines, fighting the German invaders in Donbas, strikes them down not only for his own ravaged Ukraine but also for the great sufferings which the enemy has inflicted on you, Leningraders.... We eagerly await that hour when the ring of the blockade will be broken and the great Soviet Land will press to its bosom the heroic sons and daughters of Leningrad—a city bathed in eternal glory.

1942





Mikhail Sholokhov in 1936

Sons of the Quiet Don

At a readers' conference attended by factory workers

In the 1930s

Novocherkassk. The deputy and his electors

At the front. Writers Yevgeny Petrov, Mikhail Sholokhov and Alexander Fadeyev look at instruments removed from a blasted German tank

Mikhail Sholokhov with a gun crew

General-Lieutenant Konev speaks to Mikhail Sholokhov and Alexander Fadeyev

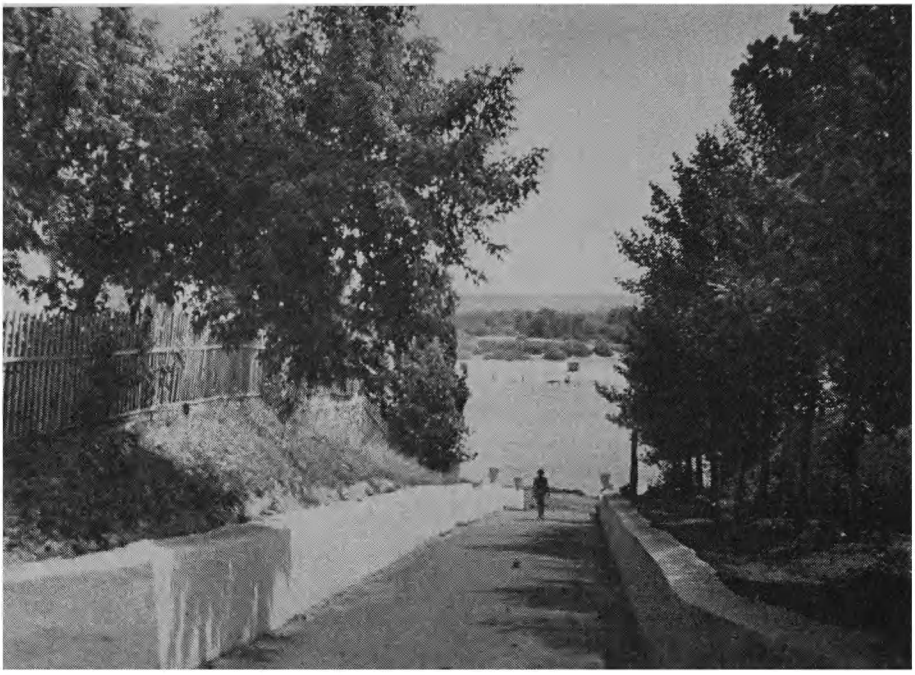
1944

They fought for their country

Sholokhov at an infantry command post

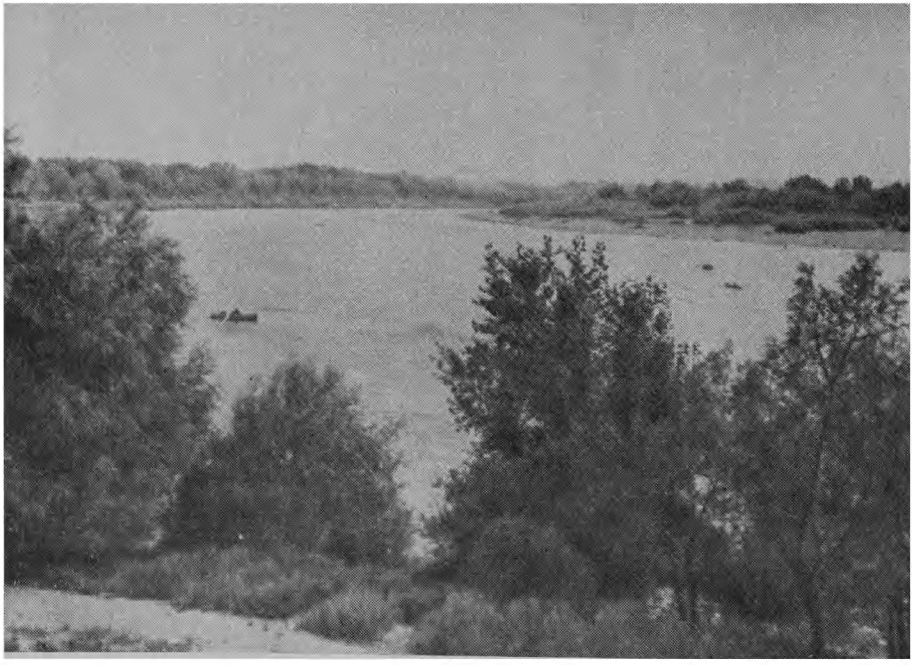
A view of Veshenskaya

A street in Veshenskaya



Veshenskaya. The road leading down to the bridge

The Don as seen from the writer's house



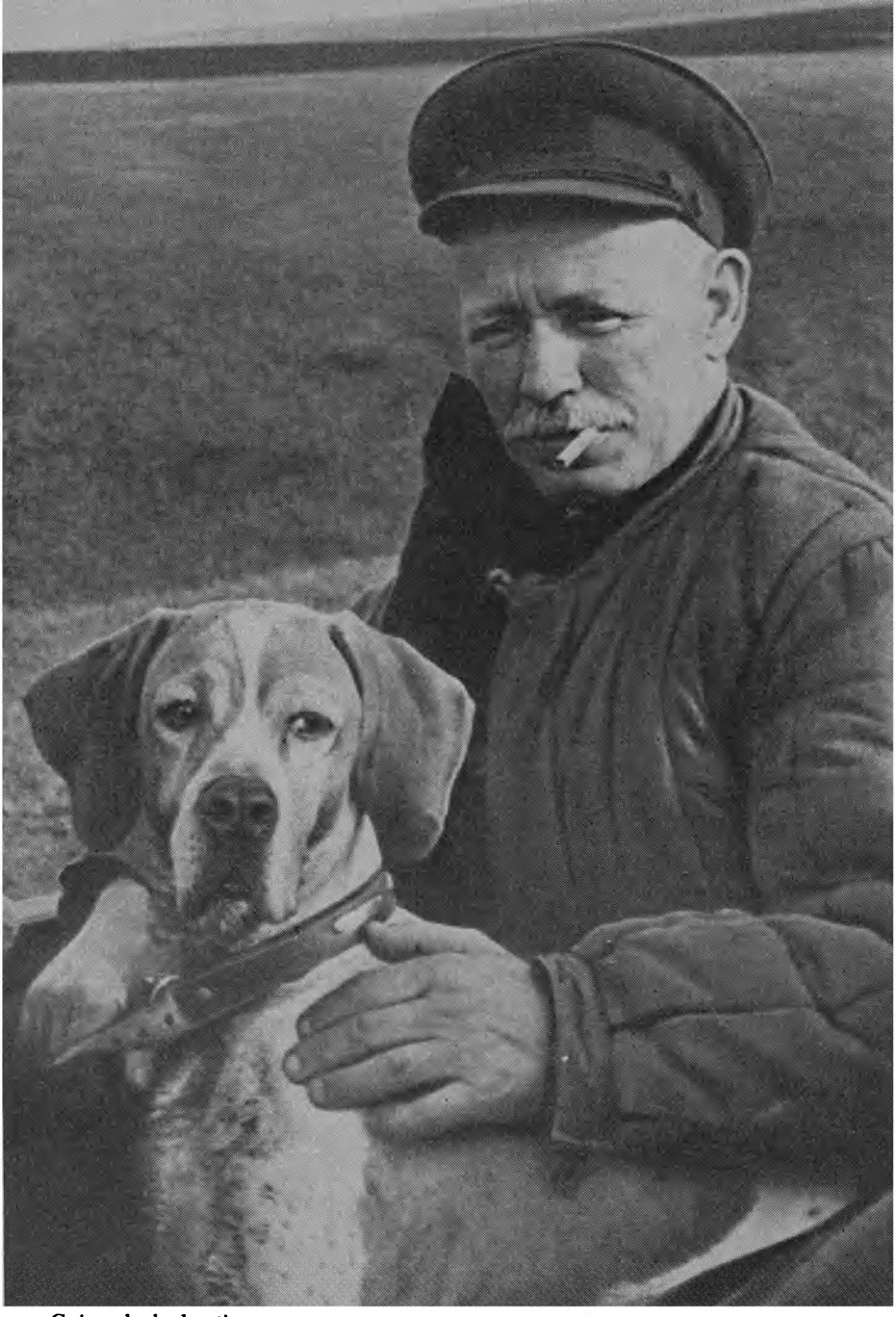
Sholokhov and his wife Maria Petrovna
at breakfast

The writer at work

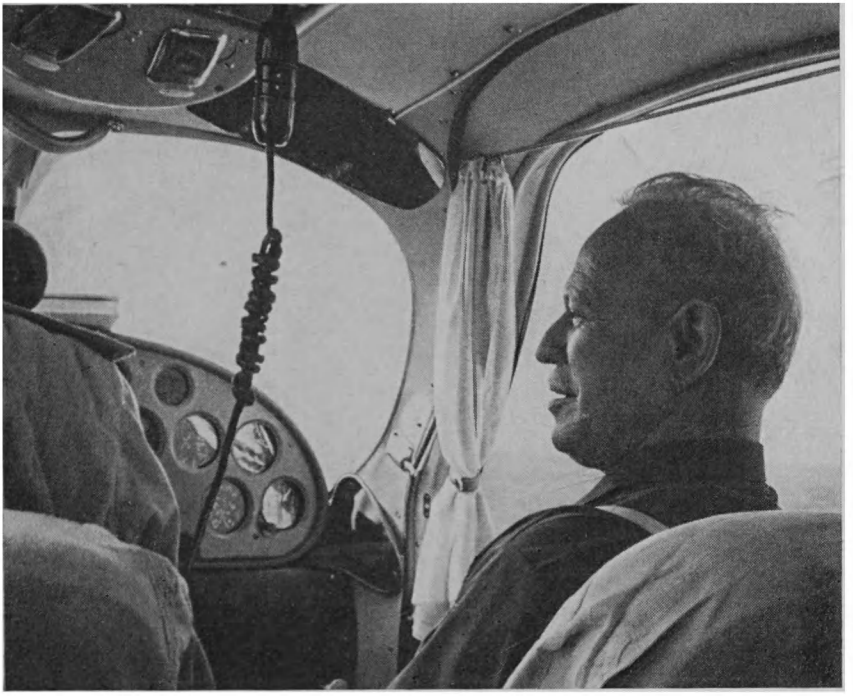
The Sholokhovs in their garden

A family picture

Fishing



Going duck-shooting



Flying over the Don steppe

On location, during the shooting of the film *The Fate of a Man*

Among today's Davidovs (at the Kirov Plant in Leningrad)

In war, trees—like people—all have their own fate. I saw a large tract of forest cut down by our artillery fire. The Germans who had been forced to retreat from the village of S. wanted to make a stand in this forest, but they were mowed down together with the trees. Dead German soldiers lay under the crippled pines, their torn bodies rotted amid the green ferns, and the pitchy fragrance of the shell-split tree trunks was lost in the nauseatingly putrid, sweetish stench of rotting flesh. One fancied that the ground itself, pitted with shell holes whose edges looked scorched, grey and brittle, exhaled a noxious smell of death.

Death ruled in silent arrogance over this clearing, created and dug up by our shells. In the very centre a birch tree had miraculously survived, and the wind swayed its wounded branches and rustled the new, glossy, sticky leaves.

We started across this clearing. The soldier, walking ahead of me, lightly touched the birch tree and said with sincere and tender concern: "Poor dear, how did you manage to survive?"

Pine trees are killed outright, they just fall dead when a shell hits them, and the severed top lies on the ground, bleeding pitch onto the needle-covered ground. Oaks, on the other hand, do not succumb to death so easily.

A German shell hit the trunk of an old oak tree, growing on the bank of a nameless little river. Half of the tree shrivelled up and died from the torn, gaping wound, but the other half, bent riverwards by the blast, revived wondrously in spring and sprouted new leaves. Till this day, I expect, the lower branches of the mutilated tree bathe in the water, while the top ones reach upward to the sun, turning their taut, chiselled leaves for its blessed warmth....

* * *

Lt. Gerasimov, a tall man with broad shoulders slightly hunched like a black kite's, sat at the entrance into the dugout, and gave a detailed account of that dey's battle and the German tank attack successfully repulsed by the battalion.

The lieutenant's thin face was calm, almost dispassionate, and his bloodshot eyes were wrinkled up from fatigue. He spoke in a deep, cracked voice, clasping his hands now and again with his big, large-jointed fingers intertwined, and this

gesture, so eloquently expressing silent grief or deep, painful reflection, seemed foreign to his strong figure and his energetic, manly face.

Suddenly he fell silent, and his face became instantly transformed: his dark, weather-beaten cheeks turned pale, he clenched his teeth so hard that the jaw muscles moved up and down under the taut skin, and his eyes staring fixedly before him flared up with such unquenchable, fierce hatred, that involuntarily I followed the direction of his look and saw three German prisoners coming from the direction of the front line of our defence, escorted by a soldier wearing a faded, almost colourless tunic, and a side-cap pushed to the back of his head.

Our soldier walked slowly. He swung the rifle in his hands in time with his measured stride, and the bayonet gleamed in the sun. The prisoners trudged as slowly, reluctantly moving their shuffling feet shod in low boots, smeared with yellow mud.

On coming level with the dugout, the prisoner who headed the file—a middle-aged German whose hollow cheeks were overgrown with a thick brown bristle—darted a sidelong, wolfish look at us, and turned away to adjust the helmet strapped to his belt. At this, Lt. Gerasimov sprang to his feet and shouted to the escort in a shrill, barking voice:

"Are you taking a stroll with them or something? Quick march! Get a move on, you hear?"

Apparently he had more to say, but fury choked him and, swinging round on his heel, he ran down the steps of the dugout. The political instructor, who was present at this outburst, intercepted my surprised glance, and explained in a low voice:

"His nerves are shot, he can't help it. He's been a prisoner of the Germans, didn't you know? Ask him about it some time. After what he had suffered there he can't endure the sight of a living German, living ones I mean. He doesn't mind looking at dead ones, but when he sees German prisoners he either shuts his eyes and sits there with sweat pouring down his ashen face, or just goes away." He dropped his voice to a whisper and moving close to me said: "I went into attack with him twice. He's as strong as a horse and you ought to see what he can do.... I've seen all kinds of things, but watching him wield his bayonet or rifle butt makes your flesh creep."

* * *

That night, German heavy guns opened harassing fire. Methodically, they fired the shells at set intervals: first we heard the distant shot, a few seconds later came the metallic scream of the shell high above in the starlit sky, the wailing sound swelled in volume and faded away, and then somewhere behind us, in the direction of the road where all day long lorries moved in a dense stream bringing ammunition to the front, there was a burst of yellow flames and the thunderous crash of the explosion.

In the intervals, when silence settled in the forest, we could hear the mosquitoes singing in their thin voices, and the startled frogs timidly calling to one another in the small pond nearby.

We lay under a nut bush, and Lt. Gerasimov told me about himself, taking his time, and chasing away the bothersome mosquitoes with a broken twig. I shall render his story as accurately as I was able to memorise it.

"Before the war I worked as a mechanic at a factory in Western Siberia. I was drafted on July 9th, last year. My family consists of my wife, two kids, and my invalid father. Well, when they were seeing me off the wife wept, of course, and said these parting words to me: 'Defend the country and us with all your might. Lay down your life if you must, but see that victory is ours.' I remember, I laughed at her and said: 'Who d'you think you are, a wife or the family political instructor? I'm old enough myself, and as for victory, never you worry, we'll get it if we have to tear it out of the Germans' throats, gullet and all.'

"My father, of course, is made of stronger stuff, he didn't weep, but he also thought it necessary to admonish me. He said to me: 'Mind you, Victor, the name of Gerasimov is more than just a name. You're a hereditary industrial worker, your great-grandfather was one of Stroganov's* workers, that's how far back it goes. For hundreds of years our family has been making iron for Russia, and in this war you must be as strong as iron too. The state, *your* state remember, kept you as a reserve officer till the war, and now you've got to give the enemy a proper beating, see?' And I said: 'So I shall.'

"On my way to the railway station I dropped in at the district Party committee. Our secretary was quite a stick-in-the-mud, and I was thinking that if my wife and my father

* The Stroganovs—a family of Urals merchants and manufacturers dating back to the 17th century.—*Ed.*

had each their piece to say to me in parting, this chap would certainly want to deliver a long-winded speech. I was all wrong! 'Sit down, Gerasimov,' he said to me. 'Let's sit down for a minute before you start, according to the good old custom.' We sat for a minute or two without speaking, then he got up and I noticed that his eye-glasses were sort of misted over. Well, well, I said to myself, what's come over people! And now the secretary said: 'It's all so clear, there's nothing much to say, Comrade Gerasimov, I remember you as a lop-eared kid wearing a red Young Pioneer tie, I remember you as a member of the Komsomol, and I've known you as a Communist for all of ten years. Go and kill the bastards without mercy. The Party organisation places its trust in you.' The secretary hugged me, we kissed according to custom, and, dammit, he didn't seem to me such a dry stick any more.... His sincerity was so heart-warming, that I came out of the office feeling really elated.

"And then my wife gave me a good laugh. It's not much fun, you know, seeing a husband off to war, and naturally enough my wife couldn't get her wits together, she kept trying to say something important to me, but her thoughts were muddled and she couldn't remember what it was. The train had already started off, she walked down the platform, close beside my window, holding on to my hand for dear life and saying very quickly over and over again: 'Mind you don't catch cold there, Victor, take good care of yourself!' And I said to her: 'Sure, Nadya, sure. I won't catch cold for anything. The climate at the front is excellent, and really quite moderate.' My wife's sweet, silly words eased the bitter pain of parting for me, and God how mad I got at the Germans! All right, you traitorous neighbours, I said to myself, you started this so look out now! We'll give you what's coming to you, and more!"

Gerasimov fell silent, listening to the exchange of machine-gun fire that had suddenly started in the distance, and as the firing ceased he abruptly resumed his story:

"We used to get machines from Germany before the war. As we assembled these machines I'd feel each part over at least five times, and I'd examine it from all sides. Those machines were sure made by clever hands, I also liked books by German authors, and somehow I was accustomed to regarding the German people with respect. True, it disgusted me at times that a hard-working, gifted nation like that could tolerate Hitler's lousy regime, but then, after all, it was their own business. And then war began in Western Europe....

"And so I was on my way to the front, and I was thinking: the Germans have powerful machines, and their army's not bad either. Dammit, I thought, it might be quite good fun coming to grips with an enemy like that and giving them a licking. We were nobody's fools either, you know. To be sure, I didn't expect them to fight a particularly honest battle—what honesty can there be when you're dealing with fascism?—but I never thought we'd have to fight such vile scum as Hitler's army turned out to be. Oh well, I won't go on about this now....

"Our unit arrived at the front at the end of July. We joined the fighting on the morning of the 27th. The first time it was a bit frightening. They gave us a lot of trouble with their mortars, but we found our bearings before the day was out, and knocked them out of the village they had occupied. In that battle we took some fifteen prisoners. I remember it as if it were yesterday: they looked scared and pale when they were brought in. My men had already cooled after the clash, and now each one of them wanted to give whatever he could to the Germans—a messtin of soup, tobacco, cigarettes, tea, or what not. They slapped the Germans on their backs, called them Kamerads and asked them what they were fighting for.

"One old soldier looked on this touching scene for a while, and then he said to the men: 'You're drooling sentimental snivel over your Kamerads. Sure they're all comrades here, but you ought to see these same comrades on their side of the front-line, you ought to see what they do to our wounded and to the civilian population!' He went away, and we felt as though a bucket of icy water had been dashed in our faces.

"Soon we went into the offensive and the sights I saw were really terrifying! Villages burnt down to the ground, women, children and old men executed in their hundreds, mutilated bodies of war prisoners—our own Soviet men, raped and brutally murdered women, young girls and mere children....

"One of them I'll never forget. She was a child of eleven or so and, apparently, she had been on her way to school. The Germans seized her, dragged her into someone's kitchen garden, raped and killed her. She lay on a trampled potato patch, a little girl, hardly more than a child, and around her were scattered her school books, sodden with blood. They had hacked at her face with a broadsword, it was terribly mutilated.... In her hand, the girl clutched her open schoolbag. We covered the body with a cape, and stood over it in silence. As silently my men went each his own way, and I still stood there, whispering in a frenzy: 'Barkov and Polovinkin. Physical Geog-

raphy. Textbook for Seven or Ten-Year Schools.' I had read this on the cover of one of the books that had fallen out of the girl's schoolbag. I knew that textbook well. My daughter also went to the fifth form.

"This happened not far from Ruzhin. And not far from Skvira we happened upon a spot in a ravine where the Germans had tortured and murdered the Soviet soldiers they had taken prisoner. Have you ever been in a butchery? Well, that's approximately how that place looked. Bodies without arms or legs and with the skin ripped off halfway hung on the branches of trees growing along the ravine.... Eight murdered soldiers were dumped together on the ground. You could not tell which part of the body belonged to whom. They were simply large chunks of meat, and neatly placed on top of the pile were eight Soviet side-caps, one pushed into the other like nest cups.

"Do you think a person can describe in words all that he saw there? No, he can't. There are no such words. This has to be seen with one's own eyes. And anyway let's drop the subject," Gerasimov said brusquely, and fell silent for a long time.

"May one smoke here?" I asked him.

"Sure. Only into your cuff," he replied in a husky voice.

He, too, lit a cigarette and continued:

"You understand we became savage seeing all those nazi atrocities, and it couldn't have been otherwise, of course. It was clear to all of us that we were confronted not by humans but by some blood-crazed monsters. They tortured, raped and murdered our people with the same thoroughness with which they once manufactured their machine tools.

"Afterwards we had to retreat again, but we fought like mad.

"Practically all the men in my company were Siberians, but we put up a truly fierce defence for the soil of the Ukraine. Many of my countrymen were killed in the Ukraine, but even more Germans met their death there at our hands. Sure we were retreating, but we gave them the whatfor just the same."

Drawing greedily on his cigarette, Lt. Gerasimov now said in a different, mellowed tone:

"The soil's good in the Ukraine, and the scenery there is lovely! Each village, big or small, had the dearness of home for us maybe because we generously watered the ground there with our blood, and blood, so people say, makes men brothers.... And when we had to leave a village like that our hearts

fair broke, dammit. We were so sorry, and we felt so bad about it that we couldn't look into each other's eyes as we retreated.

"... I never thought I'd ever have to know captivity, but it turned out that I was destined to. I was wounded the first time early in September, but I remained in the ranks. The second time was in the fighting at Denisovka, Poltava Region, on the 21st of September, and there I was taken prisoner.

"The German tanks broke through on our left flank, and their infantry poured in after them. We were fighting our way out of encirclement. That day my company suffered heavy losses. We repelled their attacks twice, set fire to six of their tanks and one armoured car, and left about a hundred and twenty dead Hitlerites on the maize field, but then they pulled up their mortar batteries, and we were compelled to leave the height we had held from midday to 4 p.m. It had been sweltering hot from early morning, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and the sun beat down so fiercely that we were near suffocated. The shells dropped thick and fast, and I remember how terribly thirsty we were, the men's lips turned black, and my own throat was so parched that I gave the orders in a strange, hoarse croak. We were running across a hollow when that shell burst in front of me. I believe I saw a column of black earth and dust in that split second before I passed out, and that was all. One shell splinter had pierced my helmet, and another one had got embedded in my right shoulder.

I don't know how long I lay there, but when I came to I heard the tramping of feet. I raised my head and saw that this was not the spot where I had fallen. Someone had pulled off my tunic and bandaged my shoulder. My helmet was gone, and whoever had bandaged my head must have been in a hurry because the end of the bandage was not secured and hung down my chest. In that first flash of consciousness I thought that my men had carried me here, dressing my wounds on the way, and it's them I expected to see as I strained to lift my head. The men running towards me were Germans. I saw them very clearly as in a good film. I groped about me with my hands: not a weapon within reach. No pistol, no rifle, not even a hand grenade. Some of my own men must have removed my map-case and my weapons.

" 'Here comes death,' I thought. What else did I think of in that moment? Nothing. If you want to know this for your future novel, make up something because I really didn't have

time to think of anything at all. The Germans were very close, and I did not want to die lying down. I simply did not want to die lying down, you understand? I collected all the strength I had and struggled up on all fours. By the time the Germans came I already stood on my feet. I stood and swayed, and was terribly afraid that I'd collapse and they'd stab me lying down. I don't remember a single face. They stood around me, talking and laughing. I told them: 'Come on, kill me, bastards! Kill me before I fall down.' One of them hit me on the neck with the butt of his rifle, I went down, but picked myself up again. They roared with laughter, and one of them waved his hand ordering me to walk. I went. My whole face was crusted with dried blood, a very warm, sticky trickle of blood still oozed from the wound in my head, my shoulder ached terribly and I could not lift my right arm. I remember how desperately I wanted to lie down on the ground, and not go anywhere, but still I went....

"No, I did not at all want to die or, even less so, remain in captivity. Fighting down my giddiness and my nausea I walked on, and this meant that I was alive, I was still capable of action. Lord, how thirsty I was! My mouth was parched, and a black veil seemed to sway before my eyes all the time. I was almost unconscious, but I walked on, telling myself all the time, 'I'll run away as soon as I've had some water and a little rest.'

"All of us, prisoners, were assembled on the edge of the woods and drawn up. The men were mainly from another unit, and only two belonged to the third company of my regiment. Most of the prisoners were wounded. Speaking broken Russian, the German lieutenant asked whether there were any commissars or officers among us. None answered. Then he said: 'Commissars and officers, two paces forward!' No one moved.

"The lieutenant slowly walked down the line and picked out fifteen or sixteen men who looked like Jews. 'Jude?' he asked stopping before each of these men, and without waiting to hear their answer ordered them to leave the line. The majority were Jews, but there were also several Armenians and Russians with dark hair and dark complexions. They were taken aside and shot before our very eyes. After that we were hastily searched. Our wallets and whatever else we had in our pockets were taken away. D'you know, I never carried my Party card in my wallet for fear of losing it. I kept it in my trouser pocket, and the Germans missed it when they searched me. Man is an amazing creature, I must say! I knew that my life hung by a thread, I knew that if I wasn't killed when I

tried to escape I'd be killed on the road anyway, because I could hardly keep up with the rest, weak as I was from my loss of blood. And yet, I was so happy that my Party card was safe, that I even forgot how thirsty I was.

"The lot of us were marched westward. There was quite a strong escort on either side of the road, and about ten men on motorcycles. We were forced to march at a brisk step, and my strength was dwindling fast. Twice I fell, got up and marched on, knowing that if I remained on the ground another minute and the column passed me I'd be shot right there on the road. That's what happened to the sergeant in the row before me. He had a leg wound and could hardly walk. He moaned and even cried out when the pain became unbearable. After about a kilometre, he said in a loud voice: 'No, I can't go on. Goodbye, comrades.' And he just sat down in the middle of the road. Without stopping, people tried to lift him up and put him on his feet, but he sank down on the ground again. As in a dream, I can still see his very pale, young face, the eyebrows drawn together in a frown and the eyes filled with tears.... The column passed him. I turned round and saw one of the motorcycle escort ride up close to the sergeant, take his pistol out of its holster, jab it in the man's ear and fire. He did not dismount to do it, you know. Before we got to the river, the Germans shot several other prisoners for falling behind.

"I could already see the river, the blasted bridge across it, a lorry that got stuck at one end of it, and here I fell face down on the road. No, I didn't pass out. I lay there, stretched out to my full length, my mouth was filled with dust, I gritted my teeth in a blind rage, but for the life of me I could not get up. The men were marching past me. One of them said in a low voice: 'Come on, get up, or else they'll shoot you.' I tore at my mouth with my fingers and all but gouged out my eyes so the pain would help me get up....

"The column had already passed, I could hear the motorcycle rolling up to me, and I got up. Without glancing back at my would-be executioner and swaying like a drunk I caught up with the column and fell in. The German tanks and cars which had just crossed the shallow little river had stirred up the silt, but we fell upon this warm, brown mud thirstily and to us it tasted sweeter than the sweetest spring water. I bathed my head and wounded shoulder in this water, and it refreshed me wonderfully. I now had the strength to go on, I could hope that I would not collapse and remain lying in the road.

"We had just left the river behind us when we saw a formation of medium German tanks coming towards us down the road. The man in the front tank, correctly identifying us as prisoners, stepped on the gas and drove straight at our column, causing panic in the front rows and squashing our men with his tracks. The escort nearly split their sides watching this scene, waving their arms and yelling something to the tank men who had poked their heads out of the hatches. When they'd had their laugh, they lined us up again and marched us on along the side of the road. They certainly like a laugh, these Germans....

"That night I made no attempt to escape, realising that I was too weak to go far. Besides, we were so well guarded that any attempt to escape was doomed to failure. But you've no idea how I cursed myself afterwards for not making that attempt! Next morning we were marched through a village where a German infantry company was stationed. All the Germans poured out into the street to take a look at us. Our guards made us run through the whole village at a jog-trot, humiliating us to boost the morale of this infantry company which was on the way to the front. We ran. Anyone who tripped or fell behind was shot on the spot.

"Before the day was out we found ourselves in a war prisoner camp. The yard of a Machine and Tractor Station had been surrounded with a thick barbed wire fence for the purpose, and inside the prisoners were packed like sardines. We were handed over to the camp guards who herded us into the enclosure, prodding and hitting us with their rifle butts. It wasn't hell, it was something far worse. There were no lavatories. The prisoners relieved themselves right there, and they were expected to stand or lie down in the stinking dung-wash. The weaker ones did not get up at all. We were given food and water twice a day—a mug of water and a handful of uncooked millet or rotting sunflower seeds. Some days the guards forgot to feed the prisoners altogether.

"On our third day there, rains began to pour. We waded knee-deep in mud. In the morning the men steamed like horses, and there seemed no hope that the downpour would ever stop.... Dozens of men died every night. We grew weaker and weaker from hunger with every day. On top of everything else, my wounds were giving me hell. On the sixth day I felt the pain in my shoulder and my head growing much worse. My wounds were beginning to fester. There was a bad smell too. I was told that gravely wounded Soviet soldiers were kept

in the collective-farm stables close to the camp, and they had a doctor to look after them. In the morning I asked the sergeant of the guard to let me go and see this doctor. He spoke Russian well. 'Go and see your doctor,' he replied. 'He'll tend to you right away.'

"I missed the sarcasm, and hopefully went along to the stables.

"The surgeon met me at the door. This was a completely finished man. Frightfully emaciated and run down, he was already half-insane from all that he had gone through. The wounded lay on filthy straw gasping in the suffocating stench which filled the stable. The majority had maggots in their wounds and those of the wounded who were able to do so dug them out with their fingers or sticks.... The dead were also dumped there in a heap, which grew faster than it could be removed....

" 'Well? What can I do to help you?' the doctor asked me. 'I have not a scrap of gauze, I have nothing! Go away, for the love of God, go away from here! Tear off your bandages and sprinkle some ash on your wounds. There's some fresh ash right here by the door.'

"I did what he told me. When I came back to the camp, the sergeant of the guard said to me with a big grin: 'Well, how did it go? Oh, your soldiers have an excellent doctor! Did he help you?' I wanted to go past him without speaking, but he crashed his fist into my face and yelled: 'So, you refuse to answer me, you dirty swine?' I fell, and he went at me with his feet, aiming his kicks at my head and my chest. He only stopped when he was too tired to go on. I shall never forget that nazi as long as I live, never! I had many beatings from him afterwards, too. The minute he'd catch sight of me through the barbed wire, he'd order me to come out and he'd beat me in silent concentration.

"You'll ask me how I came through alive?

"You see, I was a stevedore on the Kama before I got to be a mechanic, and when we had a ship to unload I'd carry two bags of salt on my back—weighing a centner each. So physically I was pretty strong, my health was alright generally, but the main thing was that I did not want to die, I had a lot of resistance. I simply had to return to the ranks of fighters defending my country, and I did return to take my revenge on the enemy.

"I was transferred to another camp, about a hundred kilometres away from the first one which was a sort of distributing

centre. The two camps were very much alike: here, too, there was a tall barbed wire fence and no roof over our heads. The food was as lousy, except that sometimes instead of raw millet we were given a mugful of cooked rotten wheat, and occasionally dead horses were hauled into the yard and we were left to divide up the stinking flesh among us. We did eat it not to die from hunger, and died in our hundreds from poisoning.... The cold set in before the end of September, the rain poured without letup, and there was ground frost in the early morning. Life was sheer unmitigated misery, and I was lucky enough to get the tunic and greatcoat of one of those who died. But even so I couldn't get the chill out of my bones. We were already used to hunger....

"We were guarded by soldiers who had fattened on looting. In character, they were all made to a pattern, and were out and out scoundrels to a man. Here is what they did for amusement: in the morning, a lance corporal would come up to the barbed wire and have the interpreter tell us to line up for food, which would be handed out at the extreme left-hand corner of the camp.

"We'd all crowd there, that is everyone who could still stand on his feet, and we'd wait for an hour, two hours, three hours. Hundreds of living skeletons shivering in the biting wind. We'd stand and wait.

"Suddenly the guards would appear at the opposite end of the yard and start throwing chunks of horse-flesh over the barbed wire. The whole hungry crowd would rush there and scramble for the dirty hunks of meat, fighting over them like animals.... The guards would roar at the spectacle, and then suddenly there'd be a long volley of machine-gun fire. The crowd would dart in a panic to the left, leaving the dead and the wounded lying on the ground. The tall Ober-Leutnant, the chief warden of the camp, would then come up to the barbed wire and, barely controlling his laughter, say: 'Your behaviour during the handing out of the food was shocking! If this happens again I'll have you Russian swine shot down without mercy. Remove the dead and the wounded.' The soldiers, thronging behind their chief, nearly died laughing. They thought him a great wit, and this was fun after their own hearts.

"We'd carry away the dead and bury them in the gully not far from the camp.... In this camp, too, beatings were part of the routine. Fists, sticks and rifle butts were used. The guards beat us simply because they were bored and this made a nice,

amusing change for them. My wounds had healed, but then they opened again because of the damp or the beatings, and ached terribly. But still I lived and did not lose hope.... We slept on the ground, in the mud, we weren't even given any straw for bedding. We'd huddle together and lie down. The pile of us stirred restlessly all night, crawling about and shifting positions for it was as freezing cold for those lying in the mud as it was for those on top of the huddle. It was agony, not sleep.

"And so the days dragged by as in a nightmare. I grew weaker and weaker. A child could have knocked me down. I looked in horror at my shrivelled arms—dry sticks with the skin stretched over them—and wondered how on earth would I ever be able to get away? I cursed myself for not attempting to escape in the very beginning. So what if they had killed me then? I would have been spared this torment.

"Winter came. We shovelled the snow to clear a space and slept on the frozen ground. There were fewer and fewer of us left in the camp.... At long last we were told that soon we'd be sent to work somewhere. Our spirits revived. It was a faint hope, but still each one of us began to hope again that maybe he'd manage to escape.

"It was cold that night, but there was no wind. Just before daybreak we heard artillery fire. The whole huddled pile of us stirred awake. When the sound was repeated, someone said in a loud voice: 'Comrades, that's our army advancing!'

"Lord, the excitement that broke loose! We were all up on our feet at once, even the men who had not been able to rise for some days. People talked in excited whispers, and you could hear muffled sobbing too.... Someone near me was crying his heart out, sobbing like a woman.... I too, I too.... The tears rolled down my cheeks and froze to ice.... Someone started singing the *Internationale* in a feeble croak, and we joined in with our thin, creaky voices. The guards opened fire on us from machine guns and tommy guns, and the order was shouted: 'Lie down.' I flattened my body against the snow, and cried like a baby. I wept from joy and also from pride in our people. The nazis could kill us, unarmed as we were and faint from hunger, they could torture us to death, but they could not break our spirit, that they could never do! And they'd better think again, if they think they can break us."

* *

I was not to hear the rest of Lt. Gerasimov's story that night, as he was urgently called away to headquarters. We met again a few days later. The dugout smelt of mould and pine pitch. Lt. Gerasimov sat on the bench with his shoulders hunched and his huge clenched hands lying on his knees. Looking at him I could not help thinking that he must have got into the habit of sitting like that in camp for hours on end without speaking, thinking his bitter, futile thoughts. . . .

"You want to know how I escaped? I'm coming to that," he told me. "Soon after that night when we heard our gunfire, we were taken to work on fortifications. A thaw had set in and it rained. We were marched northward from the camp, and the same thing happened again: when someone collapsed from exhaustion, he was shot and left lying in the road. One man was shot for picking up a frozen potato. We were crossing a potato field, and this man—Gonchar his name was, he was a Ukrainian—picked up this damned potato and tried to hide it. The German guard saw him do it and, without uttering a word, came up to Gonchar and fired at the back of his head. The column was ordered to stop and line up. 'All this is the property of the Reich,' said the guard, indicating the fields about us with a sweeping gesture. 'Whoever of you takes anything without permission will be shot.'

"As we were marched through a village, the women there threw us pieces of bread and baked potatoes. Some of us managed to catch them or pick them up, the others were not so lucky because our guards opened fire on the windows and ordered us to quicken our step. The village children—youngsters are a fearless lot, you know—ran far ahead of us and dropped the bread on the road so that we could pick it up as we came to it. I was one of the lucky few—I had caught a large potato. I gave half to the man on my right, and we ate it with the peel. I had never eaten tastier food in my life!

"The fortifications were to be built in the forest. The guard was doubled and we were issued shovels. What I wanted was to destroy their fortifications and not build them!

"I decided to make a dash for it that same day, before nightfall. I crawled out of the hole we were digging, took my shovel in my left hand and went up to the sentry, the only one guarding our group as all the other Germans were watching the prisoners digging the trench.

" 'Look, my shovel's broken,' I mumbled. I realised that if I failed to knock him down with the first blow I was as good as dead. Apparently, he suspected something from the expres-

sion on my face because he began to shrug off the shoulder strap of his submachine gun. It was then that I hit him across the face with my shovel. I couldn't hit him on the head because he had his helmet on. Still, my blow was strong enough, and he dropped dead without a sound.

"Now I had a submachine gun and three cartridge clips. I started running, and here I discovered that I could not run. I just didn't have the strength, and that was that. I stopped to get my breath back, and then pushed on again, going at a snail's pace. The forest grew thicker on the other side of the gully, and that's where I was making for. There's no remembering the times I fell, picked myself up again, and fell once more. Still, I was getting farther and farther away. I was crashing through the thickets on the other side of the rise, sobbing and gasping from exhaustion, when I heard the rattle of submachine-gun fire and shouts far behind me. I wasn't easy to catch now.

"It was growing dark. If the Germans had tracked me down I would have used all but the last cartridge on them. The last one I would have saved for myself. The thought gave me heart, and I moved on with greater caution.

"I spent the night in the forest. I sighted a village not very far away, but I did not go there for fear that I'd run into the enemy.

"The partisans picked me up on the following day. For a couple of weeks I stayed in bed in their dugout, getting back my strength. They treated me with a measure of suspicion at first, in spite of the fact that I had shown them my Party card which I had managed to sew into the lining of my greatcoat in camp. When I was well enough to take part in their operations, they changed their attitude towards me completely. It was there I started keeping a careful count of the nazis I killed, and the figure's steadily nearing a round hundred.

"In February the partisans took me across the frontline. For about a month I stayed in hospital where the shell splinter was removed from my shoulder. The rheumatism I got in camp and my other ailments will have to keep until after the war. When I was discharged from hospital I was allowed to go home to recuperate. I stayed there a week, I couldn't take any more. I was homesick for the army, because whatever you say my place is here till the end."

* *

We said goobye at the dugout entrance. Gazing thoughtfully down the brightly sunlit clearing, Lt. Gerasimov said:

"We have learnt to fight properly, and we have learnt to hate and to love. War is an excellent touchstone for sharpening all feelings. One would think that love and hatred could not possibly be placed side by side. You know the line where it says that a dray horse and a timid doe cannot be harnessed into the same cart. Well, we have done it and the two are pulling well together. I hate the nazis for what they did to my country and to me, and I love my countrymen with all my heart, and I don't want them to suffer under the nazis. It's these two feelings, love and hatred, which compel me, and all of us for that matter, to fight with such bitter fury, and it's these two feelings that will secure victory for us. We carry the love for our country in our hearts, and while our hearts are beating it will stay there: our hatred we always carry on the tips of our bayonets. Forgive me the high-flown style, but that's really how I feel," he concluded and, for the first time since I'd known him, gave me a simple, sweet and childlike smile.

Also for the first time I noticed that this thirty-two year old man who was still strong as an oak for all that he had gone through, had snow-white hair at the temples. This whiteness, acquired through untold suffering and pain, was so pure that a cobweb clinging to his side-cap vanished from view as soon as it touched his hair, and try though I might I could not discern it.

1942

A LETTER TO AMERICAN FRIENDS

We have been fighting this cruel, difficult war for close on two years. You know that we managed to stop the advance of the enemy and throw them back. But perhaps you do not know enough about the hardships which every one of us suffers because of this war. And I should like our friends to know about this.

As a war correspondent I was at the Southern, South-Western and Western fronts. At present I am writing a novel *They Fought for Their Country* in which I want to show how hard the struggle people are fighting for their freedom is. The novel is not finished yet, and so I want to address you not as a writer but simply as a citizen of one of the Allied countries.

The war has entered the lives of every one of us with all the grimness proper to an attempt by one nation to utterly wipe out or devour another. What is happening at the front, what is happening in a total war has already left an indelible imprint on the lives of all of us. I have lost my mother, killed by a bomb dropped by a German plane during an air raid on our village, which has no strategic importance whatsoever. The operation pursued an aim appropriate to brigands—to scatter the population so that people could not drive their cattle east in face of the advancing German army. German shells have destroyed my house and my library. I have already lost many friends—writers and fellow villagers—killed at the front. For a long time I was out of touch with my family, during which time my son was ill and I was unable to help in any way. But, after all, these are private troubles, the personal grief most of us know. These griefs add up to a general, nation-wide tragedy which people have to suffer when war comes into their lives. Our own personal tragedies cannot overshadow for us the sufferings of the people about which no writer, no artist has yet been able to tell the world.

You must remember that vast areas of our land and thousands upon thousands of our people have been seized by the enemy, the cruellest enemy ever known in history. Ancient chronicles tell us about the bloody invasions of the Huns, Mongols and other savage tribes. All this pales before the atrocities perpetrated by the German nazis in the war against us. With my own eyes I have seen villages and homesteads razed to the ground—these homes belonged to my countrymen, the heroes of my books—and I have seen orphans, people left without a roof over their heads, I have seen horribly mutilated bodies and thousands of wrecked lives. All this has been brought into our country by the Hitlerites on orders from their maniacal leader.

Hitlerism is preparing the same fate for all the countries in the world—your country too, your home, and your life.

We want you to take a sober look ahead. We very much appreciate your friendly, disinterested assistance. We know and value the measure of your efforts and your difficulties connected with the production and especially the delivery of goods to our country. I have seen your trucks in our Don steppes, and I have seen your splendid aircraft in combat with planes that raided our villages. There is not a person in our country who is not aware of your friendly support.

But I want to speak to you very bluntly, as the war has taught us to speak. Our country and our people have suffered terrible wounds in this war. The clash is only just gathering momentum. And we want to see our friends fighting shoulder to shoulder with us. We call you to battle. We offer you not merely the friendship of our two nations, but the friendship of soldiers.

If for territorial reasons we cannot fight shoulder to shoulder literally, we should like to know that the mighty thrusts of your armies are aimed at the back of the enemy who has invaded our country.

We know that your Air Force is bombing the industrial centres of our common enemy with enormous effect. But if a war is to be fought well all the forces must join in. We are faced with a strong, crafty enemy who hates our people and yours with a mortal hatred. One cannot come through this war without smearing one's hands in blood. War demands blood and sweat. If denied it will take double the toll. Hesitation may have irreparable consequences. You have not yet seen the blood of your kin on the threshold of your home. I have, and so I have the right to talk to you so bluntly.

1943

A VICTORY SUCH AS HISTORY HAS NEVER KNOWN

(*Excerpt from an article*)

... While no war in world history has been as bloody and destructive as the war of 1941-1945, no army in the world has ever scored such brilliant victories as our own Red Army, nor appeared before the amazed eyes of mankind bathed in such a radiance of glory, might and greatness.

When our armies had taken Eidtkunen in Eastern Prussia, an inscription in Russian was made on the wall of the railway station building next to the German words: "741.7 kilometres to Berlin". One of our soldiers had written in a bold scrawl: "We'll get there anyway." And signed it: *Chernousov.*

Do not these simple words written by a Russian soldier ring with truly magnificent confidence? And these Russian soldiers did get to Berlin, and what is more they buried forever under

the ruins of Hitler's metropolis his mad dreams of world domination.

Centuries will pass, but mankind will always gratefully remember our heroic Red Army....

1945

A SPEECH ADDRESSED TO THE ELECTORATE OF VESHENSKAYA

Comrades!

Allow me to thank you for the great honour you have done me and the trust you have shown by nominating me your deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

It gives me pleasure to appear before you, people of my native *stanitsa.* All of you know me well, and I know every one of you very well too. So there is no need for me to tell you about myself. I shall say a few words about the tasks confronting you and me. The Soviet Government and our Party require us to repair the ravages of war as soon as possible. We must bend our efforts to the rehabilitation of economy. The restoration of agriculture will increase the potential of our Motherland.

Apart from the general problems which we shall tackle together with the entire Soviet people, we have our own task of restoring its former glory and beauty to our district. The Government has allotted large sums of money for the restoration of Veshensky District, but we must make every endeavour to utilise our local possibilities to the best advantage. Our task is to make our ravaged Veshenskaya *stanitsa,* within a year or two, the beautiful, urbanised place it was before the war.

A deputy has many complex duties to perform. A deputy must lend an attentive ear to all the requests and complaints of his electorate. A deputy must be an active functionary, zealously supervising the implementation of the Government's decisions in his own constituency.

I promise to serve your interests. My main profession is writing, and I promise to do good work in the literary field, so that you will not need to be ashamed of me.

1946

From the article
A WORD ABOUT MOTHERLAND

It's winter. Night-time....

In the solitude and quiet of the night, close your eyes, my dear countryman and friend, and let memory take you into the recent past. Then, with your mind's eye, you shall see:

...The cold, whitish mist wreathing eerily over the forests and marshes of Byelorussia, over the empty, long-abandoned dugouts overrun with shrivelled ferns, over the crumbling trenches and foxholes filled with rusty water through which you can see the dull glimmer of the verdigris-covered cartridge cases, lying on the bottom....

In Smolensk and Moscow country the pine trees, cut all over with shell splinters, moan hollowly and bend their crowns before the taut northern wind.

White, fluffy snow falls rapidly on the outskirts of Lenin's deathless city, as though anxious to cover up the cruel scars left by the war on this land, which our people hold sacred.

Sun shadows slide across the resurrected fields of the Ukraine which, ploughed up time and again by countless shells, still remember the thunderous noise of battle.

Biting snow, falling at a slant, is swept by the wind round Kursk, Orel, Voronezh and Tula—this ancient Russian country which for three whole years groaned under the insupportable weight of thousands of tanks. The last leaves, scorched by the frost, have fallen from the trees and everywhere—on the fields, on the highroads and cart tracks, trodden by the numberless patient feet of our infantry, unquestionably the world's best—they stand out in russet patches as though human blood were seeping through the snow.

In the boundless steppes round Stalingrad where every bit of ground is sown with splinters of a once lethal metal, where choice German divisions were reduced to dust and ashes, the angry wind blowing from across the Volga chases a ball of tumble-weed, as ugly and as rusty-brown as the skeletons of German tanks and cars scattered over the steppe.

And in the Crimea and the blue Caucasian foothills, dazzlingly white threads of gossamer are still floating about in the transparent, cooled air. Where once the roar of battle went on day and night, the trenches and shell holes fringed round the edges with shaggy weeds have become covered over with a silver web, and the threads, beaded with tiny teardrops of dew, sag under the weight and tremble.

And everywhere, from Stalingrad to Berlin, from the Caucasus to the Barents Sea, wherever your glance may linger, you will see, my friend, the graves of soldiers who had died in battle, graves dear to our Mother-country's heart. And in that moment you will poignantly remember those countless losses borne by your country in defending our own Soviet power, and in your memory the words "Eternal Glory to the Heroes Who Fell in Battle for the Freedom and Independence of Our Motherland" will sound like a solemn requiem.

Recalling the past, you will find yourself thinking: how many people have been orphaned in the war! On this long winter night, with time and room for sorrowful reminiscences, many a woman, widowed in the war, will in her loneliness press her hands to her aged face, and in the darkness tears as bitter as wormwood will scorch her fingers. Many a child's heart, wounded never to heal by the death of the father who fell in battle for his socialist Motherland, will shrink with unchildlike pain from a chance recollection at bedtime. Or else, it may be like this: in a small room, where a melancholy quiet has dwelt for years, an old man will come up to his grey-haired wife, tearlessly mourning her dead sons, and look into her lustreless eyes from which the supreme tragedy of a bereaved mother has squeezed out all the tears. And in a hollow, quavering voice he will say: "Come, mother, come, don't take on so.... Please don't, dear.... We're not the only ones...." Without waiting for a response, he'll walk away to the window, clear his throat to gulp down his tears, rising in a short, dry sob, and will stand there for a long time staring at the misted window with unseeing eyes....

Remember, friend, that in the thirty years of Soviet power the USSR has never known defeat in war or in any undertaking, however great the difficulties involved. Victory in the last, the greatest of wars, has cost us enormous sufferings and untold losses but these sacrifices placed on the altar of our country's freedom did not lessen our strength, nor did the bitterness of bereavement make our spirit drop.

It sometimes happens that steppeland wormwood sprouts luxuriantly and spreads in a bluish haze over the lush grassy meadows adjoining the wheat fields, and as the wheat grains ripen they absorb the bitterness of wormwood. Flour milled from such wheat grains is no good for cakes and other nonsense. But bread is still bread, despite this slightly bitter taste. And it seems a blessing to those who toil in the sweat of their brow,

for it lavishly gives man the strength to expend in the morrow's endeavour.

The people are healing the war wounds with miraculous, fantastic speed. Towns and villages are rising from the ruins; the mines in my native Donbas have come back to life; a harvest has already been grown on the fields which two years ago had bristled with thistle and weeds; smoke is pouring from the chimneys of the resurrected factories; new industrial enterprises are springing up in places where desolation reigned. Even a Soviet person who has seen things and has learnt to expect the impossible from the creative might of the people's genius, will gasp and shake his head in glad amazement on learning that a reconstructed giant of metallurgy has been commissioned before the set date, or that a heretofore unknown Stakhanovite has set a new all-Union record.

The working class of Leningrad—the pride of the country—has already issued a challenge to workers everywhere to try and fulfil the five-year plan in four years. And the magnificent outlines of a new, beautiful life are visibly rising before our eyes.

Mighty indeed is the Party that could organise, teach, arm and rally the people to the performance of feats unprecedented in history! Great indeed and invincible are the people who not only defended their country's independence and routed all the enemies, but have also become the beacon of hope for working people everywhere in the world!

Being a true son of such a people and such a Party, is it not, my friend, the greatest happiness we and our contemporaries can know in life? And do not we, the presently living, draw inspiration for indefatigable endeavour and new feats of heroism from our stern responsibility for the fate of our Motherland, for the cause of the Party, a responsibility we owe not only to the coming generations but also to the sacred memory of those who fought and died, defending our country?

* * *

On January 21, the day of Lenin's death, the world's workers will pay a tribute of silence, just as they did 24 years ago, just as they have done ever since on this day of mourning, to the man who showed mankind the way to a new life. He, the leader of a great Party and the founder of the first socialist state in the world, said these unforgettable words in 1919:

"In this country, in Russia, for the first time in world history, the government of the country is so organised that only the workers and the working peasants, to the exclusion of the exploiters, constitute those mass organisations known as Soviets, and these Soviets wield all state power. That is why, in spite of the slander that the representatives of the bourgeoisie in all countries spread about Russia, the word 'Soviet' has now become not only intelligible but popular all over the world, has become the favourite word of the workers, and of all working people.

"Soviet power," Lenin said, "is the road to socialism that was discovered by the masses of the working people, and that is why it is the true road, that is why it is invincible."

Our friends know from what inexhaustible source we draw our strength both for war and for peaceful work.

Our enemies remain true to themselves: some go in for plain slander, doing it crudely and with their characteristic brazenness, while others hastily dig in their dusty archives and bring out the old, moth-eaten arguments about the "mysterious Slav soul" and "Russian fanaticism", covering up their shabbiness and baseness with these threadbare rags, pretending that they just cannot understand where the Soviet people get their tremendous strength.

At the cost of many years of suffering and by a great revolutionary struggle our people found the only fair system of government, they fought for it with resolution and courage, consolidated it with their blood and their toil, and no power on earth can shake their faith in this system.

When you compare the recent past with our present day you will see very clearly how greatly the Russians have changed spiritually, and particularly the Russian peasants who, as collective farmers, have acquired such admirable, new qualities.

*

In January 1930, when the collectivisation of farming got under way in the Don country, I happened to be travelling from Millerovo to Veshenskaya in a horse-drawn sledge. Neither my driver nor I had any delusions about our chances of making the 168-kilometre trip in quick time. The horses were tired, the road was very bad, so people said, with pits and bumps all the way, there was ground snow in the steppe, and the dense, purple clouds rising in a sombre mountain range in the eastern sky threatened foul weather.

We set off at daybreak. Out of town, the acrid smell of slag and of smoke curling from the chimneys gradually faded away and there was the fresh coolness of clean, new snow in the air, the fragrance of hay that had spilled from the haymakers' carts to each side of the road, and the pungent smell of horses' sweat. The profound wintry silence was broken only by the creaking of the runners, the snorting of the horses, and now and again, when the pit in the road was especially deep, by the crosspiece knocking against the shaft.

My driver—an elderly bearded Cossack with a youthful bearing, deep-set, roguishly twinkling little eyes and a rakish forelock—turned out to be an extremely talkative person. In the beginning he drove the horses in silence, whistling a melancholy tune and thinking his own thoughts. All I could see of him was his broad back in the tight-fitting sheepskin coat, the back of his brown wrinkled neck, and the forelock, white with hoar-frost, showing from under the fur hat which he wore at a dashing angle. But the moment I asked him something, he quickly swung round to face me and, tucking the reins under his seat, answered me readily, with a smile:

"You ought to see what's going on at our homesteads now.... God forbid and save us...."

"What is going on?" I asked.

"Why, collective farms are starting, and so the folks sit and sit at meetings. I reckon that even in Moscow they don't sit like that!"

"Like what?"

"Why, they go on day and night, for three days in a row!"

"Have many people joined the collective farm where you come from?"

"They've split in two: one half has joined, and the others are still in two minds about it, huddling like a flock of sheep in front of the homeyard gates. They all sit together at the meetings, and there they start fighting too, like young cocks. It's a laugh, honestly! My neighbour, Mikhei Fomich, an old man in his last years, who only leaves the meeting when his need is acute the way it is with the old, all but lives at the village Soviet now, sleeping there and eating there too. His old woman brings him a pot of cabbage soup for dinner, but it takes her hours to get there, shuffling over the snow, so Mikhei Fomich spoons up a bit of the ice-cold soup and settles back again to go on with the meeting, sticking in the village Soviet like a nail in the wall.... My, what an activist he turned out to be!"

"Is he a collective farm activist?"

"Who, Mikhei Fomich? Why, he's an activist on the other side, he's one of those rich middle peasants. He doesn't speak out against the collective farm, not him. He sits quietly in the back row and oozes poison, maybe something from the Bible or maybe something he has made up himself. I went to one of those meetings myself the other day. It was something of a squeeze on the benches: I sat on the end, next to me sat this same Mikhei Fomich, and next to him a widow, Yefrosinya Melnikova her name is. Mikhei Fomich buzzed and buzzed so we couldn't hear the speakers. This Yefrosinya Melnikova asked him to shut up very politely, then she asked him once more, but still he went on. The speaker was a Party man from the district centre, he was telling us about collective farms, and Mikhei Fomich went on with his own speech, whispering that this would be bad, and that would be even worse. . . . And then he nudged Yefrosinya with an elbow and said quietly: 'First they'll make all the cows common property, and then they'll drive all you women under a common quilt to sleep with the men. I heard this from someone who knows.' And she, quick to make fun, went and said: 'Oh well, I'm a poor widow so I don't stand to lose, only heaven forbid that I should have to sleep beside you! I'd have to resign from the collective farm then.' Well, Fomich didn't like it and asked in a louder voice: 'Just what do you mean by that, you shameless hussy?' This got Yefrosinya real mad, and she shouted for all to hear: 'I mean that you stink of mouse droppings like an old barn from a mile off!' Well, one thing led to another, and they went at each other's throats, he calling her a shameless so and so, an impious sinner and so on, and she telling him that naturally he went against the collective farm, him being a near-kulak with two pairs of oxen and a pair of horses, while all she had was one wretched cow. He called her a dirty name, and she cursed back as well as she could, and then they began to fight. Like under the old regime, Fomich knocked the shawl off her head and grabbed at her hair. Yefrosinya—no fool, that woman—caught hold of his beard and, being a young and strong lass, she gave a tug and plucked out a handful of hair. It was a job pulling them apart, honestly. I glanced at Fomich and saw that half of his beard was clean gone! I tried not to laugh and said to him: 'Don't go to any more of these meetings, Mikhei Fomich, or else the womenfolk will pluck you like a chicken, they won't even leave you any down for fluff.' He glared at me, proud-like, and said: 'I won't leave off going to the meetings even if

it costs me the last hair on my head!' That's what an activist he turned out to be, I'd never have thought it of him."

"And you, have you joined the collective farm?" I wanted to know.

He stroked his brown beard sedately, and roguishly screwed up his restless blue eyes.

"There's no hurry," he said. "Be it a wedding or any other happy occasion, I never hurry to sit down at the table first. When you sit down last, you have the end seat and if need be you can get out first." In case his figure of speech was not quite clear to me, he added: "It may be that I won't like it at that table, so what the devil for should I get into the squash under the icons?"

Laughing, I told him that if he waited too long he might not get any seat at all at that table.

"Not me," he shook his head stubbornly. "I keep a sharp lookout. I've been invited to join the collective farm seeing that I'm the typical vacillating middle peasant: a pair of horses and a plain old cow are all I own. But since they call me that at the meetings, I'll vacillate some more. I want to get a real good look at this collective farm, and rushing headlong into it is sort of, how shall I put it. . . ."

"Frightening?" I prompted.

"No, I don't scare easily, but I like to play safe. Just in case. You tell me this: which is it safer to be—a collective or a private farmer? Which kind of life I should keep clear of? I'm afraid to make a mistake, you see. I got plenty of knocks when I was young, and I know that you may be expecting trouble from one side and it will hit you from the other, and good luck to you! I'll tell you something, as an example. About thirty years ago, my late parents found me a bride on another farmstead, and we went to take a look at her. I was a brave fellow, but that first time I saw her my heart stopped beating and next moment I felt it hammering in my throat. . . . Standing before me was a robust wench with bold, sparkling eyes, and a face so beautiful, like the loveliest flower! She was looking at me, and I could not force out a word, and stood there as dumb as a dead fish.

"Well, they left us alone in the room, and we sat down on the chest together, and I still did not say a word and just blinked my eyes as I looked her up and down. One thing struck me: her tiny hands, they were as small as a child's. I remember thinking that with hands like that she'd never lift a pitchfork, so what sort of help would she be on the farm?

My head was working, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth. We sat like that for a long time, and finally she lost patience and bending close to my ear whispered: 'Maybe you're dumb?' I shook my head, but again I could not speak, I tried but it was no use. Then she frowned and told me sharply: 'Show me your tongue. Maybe you'd bitten it off on the way here when the cart bumped.' Like a fool I went and stuck my tongue out. . . . Oh, hell, I blush to this day to remember what a fool I must have looked. She laughed so hard that tears rose to her eyes. She fair choked with laughter, she pressed her hands to her breast, and between gasps she screamed: 'Mother, come here! Look at him! Why, he's a plain fool! How can I marry him?' That's how rotten things turned out.

"I was mad at her but I wanted to laugh too, and here I looked at her laughing mouth and my heart dropped again: her teeth were so white, white as white, strong and sharp, set close together, and she had a mouth full of them like a young wolf. Now look at that, I said to myself. With teeth like hers she'll easily bite a year-old calf in two, so what'll happen to me if I marry her? If we have some disagreement she won't get the better of me with her hands, of course—her hands are too small for a fight—but supposing she goes for me with her teeth, heaven forbid? She'll rip my skin off in shreds. Why, before I know it she'll have ripped enough hide off me to make two breech-bands at least.

"Maybe it was from fear, or maybe from anger, but anyway my tongue began to move again, and I said: 'You're having your laugh now, but mind you don't have to weep when you marry me." And she came back: 'We'll see, said the blind. It remains to be seen which one of us will weep.'

"We left it at that. And do you think she got the upper hand over me with her teeth? No, not with her teeth. No, God spared me that. She's still got a mouthful of them old though she is, and the cursed old hag can still crack cherry stones with them as though they were sunflower seeds. It's with her tiny hands that she got the better of me. Little by little, from year to year, she tightened the reins more and more, and maybe I could break loose now, but it's too late, I'm used to wearing my horse collar, I take my misfortune for granted now, just like a mangy horse takes the crust on its back. I'm easy to handle when I'm drunk, and easier still when I'm sober, and so she bullies me all she wants, the witch.

"Sometimes we, older Cossacks, get together on a holiday, drink a litre each, talk about old times, who served where,

who fought where, and sing a song or two.... But you know, however much a foal likes to frolick in the meadow the time always comes for him to run home to mother. Well, I'd crawl home on all fours and there my wife would be waiting in the door for me with a frying pan held at the ready like a rifle. It's a long story, naturally, and I won't go into it.... One thing I'll tell you: she taught me to open the door with my back, that I admit. No matter how much I've had to drink, I'll never forget to give myself the order: 'About turn!' And that's how I enter the house, back first. It's safer that way, and I suffer less damage. I wake up next morning with my back aching all over, as though someone has been threshing peas on it, I find a bowl of cabbage brine beside my bed, and the wife gone. Before my hangover has passed maybe I'd take my resentment out on her, but she makes herself scarce till evening and the devil himself couldn't find her even if he carried a lantern. Naturally, my anger cools before the day is done, and when she comes back she looks at me sweetly and asks: 'And how are you, Ignat Prokofievich?' And I say: 'I'm all right, only I'm sorry I didn't catch you this morning, damn you, or I'd have hacked you into splinters for the fire.'

"She's always begging me to make an oakwood handle for the frying pan, but I'm not that simple either, so I choose the rottenest little tree and whittle the wood to just thick enough to hold the frying pan without snapping.... Well, that's how it goes with us.

"Why d'you think I'm telling you all this? Because, you see, when I married my wife it's her teeth I was afraid of, and what I'm suffering from is her hands. It's the same now: I'm afraid of joining the collecive farm, yet who knows, maybe running my own farm will make me howl like a lone wolf. You stick to individual farming and before you know it you'll have your tongue lolling. Am I right?"

Grinning into his beard, he gave me a wink and screwed up his eyes, telling me with his roguish look that he wasn't as simple and harmless as he seemed, and he was leaving me to take everything he said any way I wanted—as a joke, or in earnest.

He remained silent for several minutes, and then said in a sadder tone, without any playful notes in it: "How the plague can I know what to do.... Oh well, we'll live and see."

All of a sudden he rose from his seat, lashed at the horses with unexpected ferocity, and shouted at them: "You damned

individual farmers, you've been eavesdropping, have you? I'll teach you how to swish your tails!"

The snow which had been drifting down in sparse flakes soon began to fall hard, the wind became more vicious, sweeping snowdrifts across the road, and the tired horses with curly hoar-frost in their groins changed from a heavy jog-trot to a walk.

It was midnight when we reached the village of Nizhne-Yablonskoye. The large village was plunged in darkness, except for a faint light showing through the unshuttered, ice-encrusted windows in one of the cottages.

We went there and asked to be put up for the night. I went indoors while Prokofievich unharnessed the horses. On a low, lopsided stool placed beside the bed, piled high with rags, sat an old man, his legs spread wide apart and his back hunched despondently. At his feet slept a small black lamb, curled up on a matting of straw. Its curly wool glistened softly in the dim light of the paraffin lamp. The old man grudgingly answered my greeting, glanced at me casually and dropped his head again. His big, rough hand lightly and tenderly stroked the lamb, the thick fingers barely touching the gleaming black curls.

An old woman, obviously his wife, spoke from the stove-couch: "You'd better go and show him where to put the horses."

My host slung his sheepskin coat on his shoulders and without speaking a word went out.

"D'you always go to bed so late, or did something go wrong on your farm?" I asked the woman.

Glad of the chance to talk to a stranger, she readily replied:

"What farm have we, my dear man! Seems like we've done all our farming. The wind has the run of the place now. All we've got left are two sheep and this small lamb here. Even the dog we had has run off from our empty yard, there's nothing for him to watch anymore."

Groaning and wheezing, she sat up, hung her stockinged legs down over the side of the stove-couch and, screwing up her eyes shortsightedly at the yellow flame in the lamp chimney, continued:

"My old man is not all there, honest to God. This is the fourth night he's gone without sleep. He'll go to bed in the evening, he'll lie down for a bit, then he'll light the lamp, sit at the table, roll himself a great big cigarette and sit there smoking and saying nothing all night. I've even forgotten the

sound of his voice. By morning there's so much smoke in the house that, believe it or not, my head goes round and round and I can't breathe for choking. And I don't dare say anything to him: he'll glare at me savagely, slam out of the house and, with never a word, go away into the yard."

With the timeless gesture common to all Russian peasant women, she cupped her chin in her hand and said sorrowfully: "He's hardly eaten these four days. He'll sit down to dinner, pick up his spoon and lay it down again, reaching for his tobacco pouch with his other hand. How this cigarette smoking doesn't sicken him, I don't know. His face's all sunken and grey from not eating, and yet he smokes and smokes. He's healthy actually, except that he's sick at heart and this malady's gnawing at him. . . ."

"What sort of malady is it?" I asked, already guessing the cause of this illness.

The woman promptly confirmed my suspicions.

"We joined the collective farm last week, what else? He took the horse there himself, and drove our pair of oxen and the cow to the common cattleyard. We still have the sheep. The place is like a graveyard without the animals. . . ."

Bending forward, she whispered confidentially: "D'you know what he went and did yesterday? He chopped down an apple tree for firewood. A good tree, mind you. I just gasped—my old man must be mad! What sweet early apples this tree bore us! But he doesn't seem to feel sorry for anything any more, he doesn't need anything, he cares as little as if all this belonged to someone else. No one forced him to join the collective farm, he put his name down of his own free will, and yet see what it's done to the man! He came back from that meeting in such a happy mood, and he said to me: 'Well, wife, you and I are collective farmers now. I put my name down today. We're going to work all of us together in an artel. Maybe we won't burst with food in that collective farm, but at least we won't slave so hard, and it's time we had a rest.' I began to cry, and he said: 'Fool woman, it'll be easier on us, old people, so dry your tears.' But when he led the animals off, he became a changed man. . . . True, they promised to give us back our cows, but who knows, maybe they will and maybe they won't. . . ."

We heard the snow creaking on the front path, and men's voices. The old woman stopped talking and quickly pulled the ragged quilt over herself, head and all.

Stamping noisily with his frozen felt boots, Prokofievich walked into the house, and behind him came our host.

At supper, Prokofievich did everything to draw our host into conversation, but the old man kept a morose silence, or else gave a brusque "yes" and "no", making it obvious that his importunate guest was a nuisance. With a hurt air, Prokofievich spread his sheepskin coat out on the bench and lay down to sleep. The old woman must have gone back to sleep, and only our host was still up. He went out into the yard and brought back an armful of firewood. He lit the small stove he had built under his bed, and squatted before the fire. Sensing warmth, the lamb moved up closer. It stood swaying on its feebly bent legs, then started bleating softly calling mother, and finally lay down at the old man's feet again, staring into the fire with its bulging yellow eyes. The rainbow reflections of the flames trembled in these long, slanting eyes, truly a devil's eyes.

"Look at this insect, just born yet it knows where it's better to be," the old man indicated the lamb with a nod, and gave a faint smile.

Now that the long silence had been broken, I ventured to ask: "Why don't you go to bed and sleep?"

"I've no sleep, that's why."

The sorrow he carried within himself was apparently brimming over, he could not bear it in silence any longer, and he unburdened his soul to me, now and then glancing at me with his sunken, gloomy eyes.

"Old men never sleep soundly, and what with things being as they are, they don't sleep at all. Clerks and townspeople think lightly of our peasant life, but they should not. The other day, a man was here in passing, a representative he was from the district centre. I had just brought my oxen and cow to the collective farm, and he said to me: 'You'll draw an easy breath now, Grandad. You won't have a care in the world. No sheds to clean, no feed to worry about. Come winter all you'll have to do is eat and sleep. Maybe in spring or in harvest-time you'll help the collective farm a bit as far as you're able.'

"A light-minded person reasons lightly too. Did I join the collective farm because I wanted to be a drone? Sure I will work while I've strength in my hands and can stand up on my feet, so's not to die of boredom. And according to him it's like this: I must draw an easy breath now that I got rid of my animals. Good riddance, he thinks. And actually it's not the way he thought it'd be at all. I gave away my horse, my oxen, my cart, my trap with metal wheels, two horse collars and all the harness I had, and now I don't know if I'm living or not,

the whole wide world has kind of dimmed for me.... I'm sick at heart, and there's nothing I can do about it, it's getting me down. To think that since I was a mite I grew up beside horses and oxen, all my life they kept me in food, I'd grown old with them, and now I've been left without any draught animals, and I feel like an old tree stump in the forest.... There's no one waiting for me out in the yard, the yard's empty, you see.... Can you understand this, man, there's no one waiting for me in the yard? Or maybe you think this kind of sorrow settles light as a feather in a man's heart?

"Take the oxen, for example. The care they need, you'd be surprised. In summer and in harvest-time—you graze them all night, so they'll have plenty of strength, and you never sleep a wink for fear that they'll wander off come dawn, and do damage to someone else's wheat field. You have to work in the daytime and when you haven't slept for several nights in a row you sway like a drunk and all but drop the pitchfork, it feels so heavy. When autumn comes, you've work up to your nostrils with these oxen, and all through winter, too. You have to get up two or three times in the night and go and look in on them. Put more hay in the trough because the nights are long and you can't give them the lot in the evening—they'll scatter it under their feet, and waste a lot. And your hay has to last till spring. No matter how hale the oxen seem after wintering, you've got to feed them properly in spring, or else with the first warm wind they'll lie down in the rut and not budge. That's when you'll have a load of trouble with them, I'm telling you.

"It's the same with the horse, it wants the same good care: you must water it in time, scrub it down, and before going anywhere at night you must give it grain or hash to eat.... That's how a good farmer spends his night—in cares and work. That's why he learns to sleep like a hare: he seems to be asleep, but he has his ears cocked all the time, and with the first cockcrow he must be up and doing, no time to loll in bed.

"In the fifty years since I've been my own master I got out of the habit of sleeping all through the night, and now I've lost sleep altogether. I doze off at first, but I wake up round midnight, and my sleep's gone, I'm wide awake. Last night, too, I dozed off for a little, and then I awoke with a start because it was time to give the oxen a bit more hay. I stuck my bare feet into my felt boots, put on my sheepskin and went out into the yard, and it wasn't before I got to the barn that I remembered that my oxen were at the common cattleyard and

that an easy life has come to me at last.... And I felt so sick at heart from this easy life, it was worse than the worst illness!"

I slept fitfully, and far into the night I heard the old man's plaintive, muted voice, and his dry cough. Prokofievich roused me before sunrise. In the small stove the coals, dusted with ashes, glowed palely, and tiny bluish tongues of fire darted over them gaily. The old man was asleep, sitting on his low bench and leaning back against his bed. His hand hung down as before to touch the back of the lamb, and his big, thick-jointed fingers trembled and lightly caressed the curly wool.

Disturbed by the sound of Prokofievich's footsteps, the old man stirred in his sleep, but he kept his hands where they were as if, even in sleep, he dreaded parting with the lamb, the last poor thing he owned whose living warmth was the remaining link with his recent past as an individual farmer.

*

I remembered this old man as I was returning from Stalingrad last autumn.

We arrived at one of the collective farms not far from Kalach in the middle of the night. Just as that time, in 1930, we drove to the only house that had a light in the window. This was a small cottage at the end of a wide street overrun with grass.

There was something touching and dear in the moonlit scene: I saw a street of new whitewashed cottages and stands of tall Lombardy poplars that seemed to keep guard over them. The driver stopped the car, and immediately my nostrils were assailed by the bitter smell of wormwood coming from the nearby meadow.

As the headlight swept along the low grey fence, a man with a greatcoat slung over his shoulders appeared on the porch. Screwing up his eyes against the dazzling light, he limped down the porch steps and called out:

"Kolesnichenko, is that you?" At the gate, he said in disappointment: "No, it's a passenger car. Who are you? Where are you from?"

"That's a house-owner for you, as stern as they come," the driver said jocularly. "We had barely stopped at his gate and he's already interrogating us, and before we know it he'll order us to present our credentials. Is everybody here so particular?"

The man in the greatcoat came to the door of our car, and said good-naturedly:

"Well, maybe *I would* ask you to present your credentials. I suppose you mean to stay the night, do you? Well, that's the whole point: it's late, there's no place I can suggest, so you'll have to stay with me. Don't mind about the interrogation, it's a frontline habit.... Besides, I'm in authority here, being chairman of the collective farm."

He led the way into the house. An elderly woman and two children were asleep on a wide bed. She opened her eyes for a moment and immediately closed them again, sleeping the overpowering sleep of a terribly tired person. Our host rolled up the wick a little in the paraffin lamp, and asked us to sit down.

"You must forgive me but I'm not going to rouse the missus," he said, dropping his voice to almost a whisper. "She's been up for three nights, delivering the grain to the state stores."

The grey hair on the sides of his sunburnt face and the deep-cut lines on his forehead told us that the life of this man had not been very easy.

Walking on tiptoe, he went and fetched a jug of milk and sat down at the table with us.

"Help yourselves. It's all the refreshment I can offer you."

"Have you been the chairman long?" I asked him.

"Since 1943. Soon after I returned from the front with a medical discharge on account of my leg wound, I was elected chairman of this farm."

By the look of him he was at least sixty, and my driver asked in some surprise:

"How did you happen to be at the front? Old men like you weren't called up."

Our host smoothed out his pepper-and-salt moustache with a jocosely dashing gesture, and grinned.

"I happened to be there the same as you, son. True, people of my age weren't drafted, and I joined up as a volunteer in summer of '42, when I just couldn't stand it any more. The secretary of our District Party Committee laughed at me and said: 'What use will you be there at your age? They might assign you to the infantry, you know, and you'll disgrace yourself in front of the young men. You'd better work here as a team leader. We need men in the rear, too.' To this I said to him: 'This is no time to laugh, Comrade Secretary, seeing what

a slice the Germans have hacked off. I wouldn't be joining up if I weren't sure of myself. As for the team leader's job, any one of our brainier women can do it. Look at the way they boss us anyway.' Well, so I joined up. At first they wanted to put me in a sapper's company as a driver, but I begged to be transferred to the infantry. It wasn't easy at my age, I'll tell you, not easy at all, but I had to grin and bear it seeing that it was my own idea to join up. I fought at Stalingrad, came as far as Kursk too, and there, at Prokhorovka, the war was over for me—I got a medical discharge. Tough luck, dammit. I was only in the ranks a year and I was wounded three times. And I wasn't as young as I used to be, you know."

He grew noticeably more animated when he came to this part of his story, and spoke in a slightly louder voice.

"On young men the wounds heal before they know it, like on young trees, but it's tougher on an old man. I know from experience. The second time I was wounded I was taken to hospital in Tambov, and there were some men there who had lost their legs. The older ones were down in the dumps, they lay there, their faces yellow and wrinkled, moaning and groaning all night, tossing and turning, worrying how they were going to support their families now, and how they would face life as cripples. The beds creaked under them all night. Naturally, their thoughts were pretty sick those sleepless nights. And a young man, he doesn't give a hang. He grieves terribly, of course, but he won't show it. When he wakes up in the morning and finds his crutches gone—there weren't enough crutches for all of them at the hospital—he'll go where he wants to anyway, hopping on his one leg and catching hold of the backs of beds or anything that comes to hand for support. He'll even sing a little song about love as he hops along. That's youth for you! Watching him you'd feel sorry for him, and envious too. If I were twenty or thirty years younger, I'd say to myself, maybe I'd hop like a sparrow, too, dammit.

"Sometimes a young soldier would be in a very bad way when they brought him to hospital, and within a couple of weeks the son-of-a-gun would already be making passes at the nurses, sighing with a wheeze like a horse's, and making faces one funnier than the other such as I, for instance, could not make for the life of me at my age. You'd watch him and marvel! An elderly soldier with a much lighter wound would turn all sour from lying in bed all the time, he'd plague the doctors and the nurses and grow sick of his own self, yet he'd stay

on and on, moping and staring at the ceiling, taking up a much-needed cot when he could long have been up and about.

"But then, what I want to say is that we, older people, got into this war because the enemy threatened to rob us of absolutely everything we had gained under our Soviet power. We simply had to join in, you must understand that. . . .

"I myself had a splinter-smashed bone that just would not knit. I asked the doctor why it took such a long time, maybe the plaster cast had not been put on properly, and he asked me how old I was. Fifty-six, I told him. Then he laughed and said: 'If you're wounded again twenty years from now your bones won't knit at all.' Was I still going to fight twenty years from then, I asked myself. Nice business, dammit.

" 'No thanks, comrade doctor,' I said to him. 'I've got to finish with the nazis much sooner. For one thing, they got me damned sore, and for another, I can't afford all that time to fool around with them. Besides, what good will I be as a soldier in twenty years' time? I'd be a hobbling shame, not a soldier. My platoon commander wouldn't lose any sleep if I took French leave, he'd run me down to earth quick enough following the trail of the sand that would be trickling from me by that time.'

"That doctor was a jolly sort, so he just laughed and said: 'Don't you worry, leave it to us, doctors. If the need comes twenty years from now we'll patch you up so neatly that not a grain of sand will drop out of you, and you'll strut like a young cock—head and tail held high!' I stayed in that hospital for about two months, and they did patch me up real well, but the wound I got at Kursk knocked me out proper."

After a pause, he resumed in a sort of defensive tone: "How could I help enlisting against an enemy like that? Think of the life the goddamned nazis had wrecked! Just before the war our collective farm already owned three trucks, two schools, a club, a flour mill, everything in plenty, food and anything we needed. And then the Germans swept through these parts, and left nothing but wreckage behind them, destroying everything, the crawling vermin.

"When I returned home in 1943, I was flabbergasted. The bloody bastards had burnt down a good half of the farm property, they had pulled apart the surviving buildings to make dugouts, the schools had been set on fire, only two pair of oxen remained from the hundred and eighty pair we had, none of the horses, and the tractors we had were all wrecked and crippled. And so we had to begin from scratch.

"All the manpower we had to work in the fields were women and children, and none but girls and boys to drive the tractors. A funny thing happened once: it was springtime, and as I walked down the field I saw a tractor standing there with the engine running and nobody in sight. What on earth could have happened to the driver and his trailer hand, I wondered. I walked on to the stand of trees at the end of the field, and there they were, both of them, sitting high up in the willow trees, looting the rooks' nests for eggs. Both were kids of fifteen, no more, so what could you expect? And yet they did the work of two grown men, unbearably hard work, truth to tell. After a cold night a tractor's never easy to start, however you try to warm it up. And very often I'd see one of these girl drivers running towards me from two kilometres away across the field, stumbling over the clots of earth and waving desperately. 'Please, Kornei Vasilyevich, give the handle a turn, I just haven't the strength!' How can a girl with her tender belly turn that handle, I ask you? She'll burst a gut, easy enough. We men are made of sturdier stuff, but even so your back will creak from the strain. . . .

"And the womenfolk? Good god in heaven, it breaks your heart to see what jobs a woman has to shoulder on the farm. She has to do everything at home, too: do her baking before the sun rises, look after the kiddies, and manage all her household chores, worrying herself sick about her soldier husband all the while. She has more work than she can manage, and more troublesome thoughts than she can think. . . .

"Once I started across the field when it was still dark, and there was my neighbour cutting hay for her cow. Her husband was killed, and she was left with four little ones on her hands. I went up to her, meaning to help, and she gave me such a look that I actually felt shaken. The first thing I did on reaching the field camp was smoke a cigarette. I'd given it up, I didn't smoke at the front, and here I rolled myself a cigarette and smoked it. The look she gave me had stabbed me right in the heart."

He drummed the table with his fingers for a reflective moment, and then said:

"You know we have an old song, women sing it:

"War is hardest on my lover
With those worries on his mind,
There's the gun for him to fire,
And there's me he left behind. . . ."

His face lit up with a jolly, young smile.

"They have a pretty high opinion of themselves, our womenfolk have, and they're right too! It's true, we remembered them day and night at the war. When the fighting got really hot you'd forget everything for an hour or two, and then you'd feel homesick worse than ever.

"When I came home and saw how the women were working, I realised what a burden they were shouldering—they were having just as bad a time as we were having there.

"I got a present when I was at the front. The usual stuff, you know—an embroidered pouch, biscuits, and suchlike. And there was a letter enclosed from a woman who worked at a factory in Moscow. 'Dear Soldier,' she wrote, 'I'm sending you a parcel and my warm regards. Give the enemy a proper beating. We here are working for defence day and night, and all our thoughts are with you.' Well, there was more things people usually write, wishing me to keep well and so forth.

"We were in the Kursk battle just then, and the situation was very grim. The German tanks came on in a black cloud, we fought back for all we were worth without a moment's respite, you marvelled every time how you came through alive, and here was this parcel.... It was delivered to me right in the trenches, and will you believe it I wept over it.... I didn't smoke so I had no use for the pouch, but I ate the biscuits, of course, and dropped bitter tears on them.... Here, I thought, was a working woman who, like us, had no rest day or night, working for us at the front, and yet she thought of me. Maybe by sending me those biscuits she was denying herself? Those biscuits tasted all the sweeter for my thoughts about her...."

He touched his greyish moustache with his fingers, and grinned.

"It was funny too. When she made up the parcel she was probably thinking of a young soldier boy, and it was an old geezer like me who got it....

"Our womenfolk shouldered a great burden during the war. They gave no thought to themselves, knowing how badly their effort was needed by the Soviet state. The way I figure it out with my old and addled brains—they have earned a memorial to themselves."

... I had only been asleep for an hour, no more, when the honking of a car startled me awake. My host's voice came from the kitchen:

"What's the idea of taking all this time, Kolesnichenko? You ought to have been here hours ago. Is the tractor to stand idle because of your pleasure? You've little sense of responsibility, from what I see. Sure, I know without you telling me that the tyres are no good. Anyone could drive a car with good tyres, and more honour to you if you can do as well with rotten ones. Look smart now, and take the petrol out to the field, and tell Semyon I'll be there as soon as it's light."

He came into the room, without putting on the light, sat down on his bed and, grunting like an old man, started pulling off his boots. I went back to sleep and very soon was awakened by someone rapping sharply on the window-pane.

"I say, Kornei Vasilyevich," a man said in a loud, husky voice. "The carts from the second team have arrived. Shall we start loading the grain or wait till morning? The oxen are dead beat."

My host went to the window and gave his orders in a low voice:

"Tell them to load the grain right now and set off. Wait a minute, we'll go to the barns together."

I did not hear him come back, but it was still dark when he was awakened again and obliged to get up and go to the farm office to call the Machine and Tractor Station because one of the tractors had broken down. He was awakened three more times before morning.

In the morning our poor driver who had also slept in fits and starts said to the host with a mournful sigh: "My, what a life! Sleeping here's like sleeping in the club with the band going full blast."

"No peace and quiet for us," our host, already fully dressed, replied with a tired smile. "It's a big farm, there's plenty to do, and so we have to use the nights too. Go back to sleep now, no one will bother you any more, I'm leaving, the farm board is meeting in half an hour."

I looked at my watch: it was half past four.

"Who on earth holds meetings at five in the morning?" our driver asked, laughing.

"It's not all that funny, son. Why, in the daytime there's no getting the board members together: one will be loading grain, another will be away in the fields, a third will be on his way to Stalingrad for some spare parts, and I, too, have to be out in the fields before dawn. That's why we decided to meet early and settle things quickly. We're all working for the same thing: to get the farm back on its feet as

soon as ever we can. We don't intend to be poorer than other farms.

"It would be a disgrace if we did, considering how much the Government helps us. We got more than thirty new tractors this year, to say nothing of other machines. That's nothing to be sneezed at, you know! Things are going uphill for us, and very quickly too. The harvest was good this year, we ploughed more land last autumn than the year before, and we planted four hundred hectares more land to winter crops.

"Seeing that we managed to keep our heads above water in the terrible drought of the year before last, there's nothing that can hold us now! That's for sure."

"Did the drought hit you real hard?" the driver wanted to know.

"It did, son, and how! But we kept our feet. It's our own land, and we stand firm on it. I think that in the old days half of the population would have died from hunger in a drought like that one. How did the peasants live before? One would be starving, and another, a rich man, would have his barns bursting with grain, yet he wouldn't move a finger to help his neighbour. And the authorities couldn't care less. It's all different nowadays. When we came to grief in that drought, the state helped us out with grain and seeds. We supported people in every way we could, we saw them through the trouble, and everyone survived.

"My, how hard we worked that spring! Some men were just skin and bone, a puff of wind might knock them over by the look of them, but still they came out to work with the rest and worked for all they were worth. Our people are pure gold, you know. That's for sure."

We left the village when the sun came up. Out in the street there was a spicy, tender smell of faded goosefoot. A raw wind blew from the Don. The weighted clouds moving across the sky hung so low that they seemed in danger of getting caught in the naked crowns of the tall poplars with the pink lining of their wings.

It was noisy and crowded around the barns in spite of the early hour. Two old men were sifting grain, and about a dozen carts which had evidently arrived from the threshing floor were being unloaded at the end barn. A small truck was also parked there, and the driver—a tall chap, wearing his padded jacket wide open and his fur pillbox pushed far back on his head—was furiously bumping the flat tyre, his mouth working with soundless but plainly readable oaths.

We drove on our way, and after about three kilometres came upon a brand-new STZ-NATI tractor chugging not far from the road. It was so new that the paint had not yet faded on the body. A man in an army greatcoat came limping behind it, bending over every few steps and measuring the depth of the ploughing with a twig.

"Why, there's our chairman, pecking like a rook!" the driver pointed gaily, smiling all over his face. "He's a menace, that hobbling devil! He won't stand for any shallow ploughing from his tractor drivers, I'll bet, and no carelessness either. I went and asked the way for us to go just before we left, and took a peep into his barns, just from curiosity. They're just bursting with grain! The people here are pleased with him. 'The old chap's on the strict side,' they say, 'but he's a wonderful chairman. He acts fairly in everything. We're doing fine because he respects us and we respect him.' I told them that we didn't get a wink of sleep at his place, he was up and about all night on his farm business. One of the old men there laughed and said: 'He doesn't know the meaning of the word "rest", not our chairman! But no pains no gains, as the saying goes. If we took less pains we wouldn't have put the farm back on its feet in two years!' "

The winter field rolled away into the distance in broad, green waves, and the beauty of it drew a gasp of admiration from the driver.

"That winter field belongs to the farm too," he said. "Look what a crop they're growing! Kornei Vasilyevich kept praising the people all night, but I'll say that things really go well if good people have a good leader. And that's for sure," he finished with a chuckle, repeating the chairman's pet phrase.

* *

Pelageya Vasilyevna Martynova, the oldest team leader at the Novy Mir collective farm, in Stary Oskol District, Kursk Region, recalled the black days of the 1946 drought when the sprouting wheat perished before her very eyes.

"The wasted effort was a pity to see," she said. "But never mind our effort, the drought caused harm to the collective farm, to the whole country! That parched, cracked earth was so painful to see, that I would have watered it with my own tears!"

Our Government decorated a large group of collective farmers in Kursk Region for the rich harvest they grew in 1947.

Pelageya Martynova was one of the group, and she was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. At the ceremony she said:

"Today, I went over my whole life in my memory, day by day. I remembered my childhood, and my married life. I've known some good, happy days, but never anything like the happiness I'm feeling today.... It makes you want to work harder still, but no matter how much you do, it will still seem too little in return for the state's wonderful concern for ordinary people like me."

Millions of Soviet people are working hard in all the spheres of endeavour prompted by their one desire to serve their glorious country.

Dear, beloved Motherland! All our boundless filial love belongs to you, all our thoughts are with you!

1948

From A SPEECH ADDRESSED TO THE ALL-UNION CONFERENCE OF PEACE CHAMPIONS

Comrade delegates,

My dear countrymen and comrades united and guided by the noblest idea in the history of mankind!

Comrade foreign friends, people close to us in heart and mind!

It is not an orator addressing you, but a writer who is used to speaking with ordinary people.

Forgive me my simple language, but try to understand that even a person who has poor command of oral speech begins to talk when life appeals to him in the name of life....

Our great country, the greatest country in the world—our Motherland which like a mother-eagle has taken 111 nationalities under her mighty wing—has rallied us here so that we should speak up, on behalf of peoples, in wrathful and resolute condemnation of those who want to unleash a new war. There is probably not a person among us gathered here who has not been bereaved by the war, who has no wounds in his heart inflicted by the last war....

The capitalists and their servants are preparing a new war. They want to sacrifice our children, and ourselves, for the sake

of their profits, for the sake of their own animal well-being....

They shall not!

People who are earning their right to a radiant future with their honest toil, resolutely say: "We want peace!"

They have said this at the peace congresses.

Let this be a warning to all those who still hope to build their prosperity on the blood of toiling mankind. They had better give up this hope.

An honest British or American soldier, a soldier wearing the uniform of any country, will not go to war against his own kind who wish him only one thing—a happy human life.

Let those who want to unleash a new war remember that the judgment of the people is the harshest judgment of all.

We look into the future with clear eyes, we have the greatest faith in our future.

In our country, where there is no distinction between mental and physical work, people mix as equals. In conclusion, I should like to tell you about a conversation I had with one "common man"....

He was an ordinary tractor driver, one of the multitude. He had fought with honour in the war, ending it in Berlin, he was wounded four times and every time he returned to the ranks as soon as he had recovered. We discussed life in general, spoke of the future, and this is what he said:

"I've broad shoulders, and so has the Soviet Union. We'll bear up!"...

1949

From the article

THE FIRSTBORN OF OUR GREAT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Corn fields stretch away on either side of the road all the way from Rostov-on-Don till Tsimlyansky, rippling like water in spring floods. They roll away farther than your delighted eye can see. You know, of course, that what you have seen along your three-hundred-kilometres drive is only a particle of the country's harvest, but still the fields before you seem boundless. The little corner of the world where you lived as a child also seemed vast and without end....

The colours which are usually so tropically garish in July and are lavished by Nature with such wasteful generosity, appear beautifully softened on this slightly overcast day with only rare flashes of sunlight. A raincloud covers half the sky in the north-east, behind the rows of tumuli. A rainbow stretches upward from the ground, but it has not the strength to pierce the sombre thickness of the clouds, and stands there on the horizon in straight not very tall columns, feeble and almost colourless.

Along the sides of the road runs an ashen-blue ribbon of wormwood—the former queen of the Don steppes. It has been shouldered out almost everywhere by cereals which have pushed right up to the road with proprietory disdain, leaving the poor bitter wormwood the dubious freedom of the collective farm pastures, the clearings in the woods and the slopes of the gullies. Immediately behind the ribbon of wormwood rises a greenish blue wall of ripening oats, covering an area of a hundred hectares, and behind that a dark yellow field with dim spots can be seen which must be either wheat or barley, late in ripening. After that comes a huge plot of bristling sunflowers, and beyond you see an expanse of winter wheat, overpowered by the winds, and lying in heavy, petrified waves, the crests gleaming like dull gold. Two combine harvesters are creeping across the field, and the sun catches a reflection in their dark-grey sides.

The steppe is uneven here, but the view is infinite, and the rim of the horizon is barely visible....

The blue mist thickens in the depths of the wide valley, dissolving into a lilac haze on the farther side of the slope, and blending elusively with the sky at a distance of twenty kilometres or so from the road. There is only the solitary watch hill to mark with its solid base the hazy line of the horizon.

There are many such mounds on the right bank of the Middle Don, both watch hills and burial tumuli. They stand on the Don heights, keeping watch over the meadow lands across the river whence in days of yore came the invading hordes of Khozars, Pechenegs and Polovtsi to raid or wage war on Russia. The invaders moved along the left bank of the Tanais (the ancient name for the Don) from the south-east, and left these indestructible memorials along their route.

Sarkel, an ancient Khozar fortress that has been routed by Svyatoslav and his host in the latter half of the 10th century, is now submerged in the artificial lake called the Tsimlyanskoye Sea. A strange feeling grips your heart and a lump rises in your

throat when looking down from the Kumshat Mountain you see not the familiar narrow ribbon of the Don, twisting and turning fancifully amid the green of the woods and meadows, but a spreading blue sea. . . .

Glory to you, my native Don sea, created by the will of the Bolshevik Party, the will which the Party implanted in the hearts of our people and with which it inspired their heroic endeavour!

Eternal glory to you, Volga-Don canal—a brilliant creation of the Soviet people's genius and toil.

The Volga-Don canal has been given the name of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the founder of our Party and our Soviet state. Along this canal sail fleets of ships loaded with coal, timber, grain, machines and paper—our country's wealth, shipped down the new waterway.

* * *

We, the contemporaries and eye-witnesses of the launching of the ambitious plan to conquer Nature, can do no more than briefly describe what we have seen. In due course, a writer will produce a masterpiece worthy of this great construction.

The story of the Volga-Don canal is a story of heroism, courage and dedication. To think of the sleepless nights, the deliberating, and the energy that went into the construction of the mighty body of the dam, the canal, the locks, and all the other structures here! The whole of our multinational country did its share in manufacturing the installations and machinery for the Volga-Don canal, and the actual construction work was done by people from all over the Soviet Union.

We have come to call the Volga-Don canal the realisation of the Russians' centuries-old dream. Peter the Great had thought about it, and so did other progressive-minded men in Russia, but their dreams did not materialise. Prince Golitsin, the Governor of Astrakhan, to whom Peter the Great entrusted the supervision of the digging, lost faith in the possibility of accomplishing this fantastic undertaking and wrote to the tsar: "Only God rules the rivers, and it would be presumptious of man to unite what the Almighty has divided."

People, united by the will of the Communist Party, have accomplished what once seemed presumptious and impossible.

The centuries-old dream of the Russians, which became the dream of all Soviet people, was made reality by the Bolshevik Party and, as in the Great Patriotic War, hundreds of Com-

munists were in the forefront at every section of the construction. They led the masses forward to harness the forces of nature and accomplish this great project.

* * *

We remember the words of Comrade Stalin: "Great energy is born only for a great aim." Great energy was displayed by people serving the great aims of communist construction.

Engineer Rezchikov, chief of the 4th section of the Tsimlyansky hydroelectric project, hails from Gorky and bears a remote resemblance in his facial features or perhaps his workingman's build to his great fellow citizen whose name the city bears.

"I had a team headed by Alyakin, and there were about twenty men in that team," Rezchikov told me, smiling and obviously feeling a bit nervous. "Alyakin himself comes from Moldavia, and so do most of the team. They were exceptionally good workers, but that's not all: last spring, when the breaking ice threatened to smash the starlings of the temporary railway bridge, they jumped down onto the moving ice and hacked at it with axes in order to save that bridge. They worked like sappers at the front.

"At the beginning of winter I went down to the river early one morning. A very, very old Cossack came up to me and asked:

" 'So you're building a dam, son? Think it will come out right?'

" 'Sure,' I replied. 'When the Bolsheviks plan something it's certain to come out right.'

" 'Go ahead, son,' the old man said with an anxious frown. 'See, the willow's red—that means the winter will be a warm one, but mind your step come spring. After the ice has broken, there'll come warm water, and if you don't look out it'll give you a good washing. It's only in books that the Don is called quiet, actually it's real ferocious in spring, smashing everything in its way. So just keep your eyes peeled to see it doesn't wreck that dam you're building.'

"He turned and walked away.

"The ice-breaking on the river did cause us a lot of trouble and worry. Provision had been made for everything, one would have thought. But the water rose so high—the highest in the last seventy years—that only by a combination of powerful machinery and sheer heroism on the part of the people was disaster averted. People went without sleep for several nights,

working to save the dam and the temporary bridge. The water rose right up to the flooring, and the cracking of the starlings was terrible to hear. The old man knew what he was talking about: the freshet carried debris, logs, and trees that had been chopped down in the floodlands of the Don, and heaped them up against the piles of the bridge, threatening to push it over. TNT was used to blast the ice, but of course this could not stop the debris and the trees piling up. The men from Alyakin's building team then jumped down from the bridge armed with axes and saws and, standing waist-deep in the madly swirling water, hacked at the tree trunks and the clutter of debris to cut a passage for the water between the bridge piles."

Neither Alyakin nor any of his team were at the construction site any more, but the feat they had performed will long be remembered by those with whom and for whom they had risked their lives.

Although the construction was more than plentifully provided with the most up-to-date machinery and mechanisms, hard physical work, often very hazardous, was by no means excluded. During the freshet the spring before, the water rushed to the foundation pits for the locks and the hydroelectric power station, washing away the gravel on the roads and destroying the pipelines of the dredges which were scooping up earth for the dams. To save these pipelines the men worked in the icy water which came up to their necks. They braved the hazards entirely on their own initiative, it wasn't a question of obeying orders. And they did save the right-bank part of the dam and the coffer-dam of the Tsimlyansk hydroelectric power station.

It was not an easy job to dam the original and now narrowed channel of the Don as the mainstream was directed to the overflow weir. Thousands of people and countless dump trucks were employed. Besides the builders there were the inhabitants of the local villages and *stanitsas* who came to help in any way they could. It was a dark night, and innumerable electric lamps and floodlights were on. Fyodor Ivanovich Rezchikov, who was in charge of this section, told me that as he looked down from his command post—a hut built from boards for the purpose—he could not tell whether it was the buckets of the escavators or thousands of human hands that loaded the trucks with stones at that fantastic rate. All he could see were the sparks flying as the rocks knocked one against the other.

The funniest thing happened to the documentary filmmakers who came over to shoot the damming. They missed the

event altogether, as they reckoned it would take sixty hours to dam the Don and the job, in fact, was completed in eight. When they arrived at dawn, it was all over, and they stared in astonishment and despair at the ridge of stones barring the way to the river. Alexei Gavrilovich Cherkassov, head of the political department of the construction, commiserated with the crushed cameramen, but there was a merry twinkle in his eyes as he said: "It really is a shame! The job was supposed to take sixty hours and the builders went and did it in eight, the wretches. I'd love to help you but I don't see how I can. Shall we blow up the ridge and start all over again? It's made to last, so wouldn't it be a pity? I do sympathise with you in your disappointment, but I'm afraid there's nothing I can do to help you."

Standing on the bank, together with the other engineers, was director of the project Vassily Arsentyevich Barabanov, his natural excitement held in check by a supreme effort of will. The older of the villagers wept seeing before them not the trouble-making Don they had always known, but a tamed river that would thereafter serve the needs of the population.

I also met Sergei Grigoryevich Petrov, a Leningrad engineer, and a very nice person with a likeable, open, workingman's face. He has had a hand in the erection of sixteen electric power stations, travelling to the Far North, to the extreme south, the east and west of our land. He is always on the go, moving from one construction project to the next, and one feels a bit sorry for him. He only manages to get back to his home-town and his family once a year, but there is no helping this enforced separation. His children, the ones of school age, cannot be shifted from one school to another all the time to wherever the father's nomadic way of life may take him. Petrov falls in love with every new construction project, he derives enormous personal gratification from each turbine which he puts into operation. I watched him now as he wiped his hands on cotton waste, and I imagined he was already thinking of his next job—in Takhia-Tash or somewhere.

* * *

The Volga-Don project is one of the greatest creations of the people. The world's largest* thirty-kilometre earthen dam rises like a mountain ridge over the floodlands of the Don. The

* At the time of writing.—*Ed.*

hydroelectric power station transmits electric energy to the industrial centres and *stanitsas* in the Don country, and water flows along the Don canal into the depths of the arid steppes.

A marvellous stairway has been built from the Don to the Volga at the high watershed, and cargo is carried over it in an endless stream.

What we see here on the Volga-Don canal is only one of those many grandiose projects which are presently under construction or are going to be built in our country for the benefit and happiness of people.

No capitalist country can dream of launching construction for the benefit of the people on such a scale. At one time foreign engineers drew up an ambitious project for transforming part of the Mediterranean Sea. They proposed damming the straits of Gibraltar and Dardanelles, lowering the level of the sea and bringing to the surface vast tracts of fertile land. An electric power station built on the Gibraltar dam would be a powerful source of energy capable of transforming Sahara's 6,000,000 sq km of desert into a flowering garden. The total cost would have been fifteen times less than that of the First World War. But in conditions of capitalism such projects of immense benefit to mankind are unrealisable. Capitalism buries in its "graveyards of projects" the fruits of progressive-minded people's scientific and engineering thought.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin wrote: "On all sides, at every step one comes across problems which man is quite capable of solving *immediately,* but capitalism is in the way. It has amassed enormous wealth—and has made men the *slaves* of this wealth. It has solved the most complicated technical problems—and has blocked the application of technical improvements because of the poverty and ignorance of millions of the population, because of the stupid avarice of a handful of millionaires."

Our Volga-Don project has been built for peace and the happiness of people. As many as 2,750,000 hectares of arid land will be irrigated. Fresh energy will be poured into our vigorously developing socialist industry, and hundreds of electric tractors will begin to operate.

* * *

The construction of the Volga-Don Canal necessitated the re-settling of many Cossack villages and farmsteads situated in the area which was to be flooded. The people did not stand to lose anything by this migration.... The Soviet Government showed truly fatherly concern for the Cossack collective

farmers, making ample provision for their immediate needs and their future.

The Cossacks received generous compensation in cash for their houses, cattleyards, water wells, apple and cherry trees. The state provided transport facilities for the moving, made building materials available to the re-settlers and, in addition to a number of other privileges, gave them plots of land on the shores of the future artificial sea.

For the old people, of course, it was a wrench parting with their homes. When they were ready to leave, many of them kissed the ground where they themselves, their fathers and grandfathers had been born.

Still, it did not take the people very long to settle down in their new homes and grow accustomed to the new sea.

It was thus with the inhabitants of the Solenovsky village who have been re-settled on the very shore of the artificial sea not far from the original site of the village where the dam of the hydroelectric power station has been built.

The Solenovsky village has quite a history. In 1918, all the Cossacks there joined a Red partisan unit, and later they were among the first to set up a collective farm, naming it after Chernikov, their partisan commander who had been killed in battle. Hundreds of Solenovsky people fought in the Great Patriotic War, and now many of them are working on the Volga-Don construction.

They were re-settled not far from the Tsimlyanskaya Druzhina collective farm whose old hands—carpenters, roofers, and blacksmiths—helped their new neighbours with truly brotherly kindness.

The ashes of the four celebrated Solenovsky partisans: Alexei Chernikov, Vassily Terskov, Moisei Yermakov and Vassily Frolov, have been reinterred in the centre of the new village.

By joint effort, new timber cottages were built for Yevdokia Kurbatova, a soldier's widow, and for Terenty Kurochkin and Alexander Skorbatov, two invalids who used to live in shabby cottages in the old village.

The Solenovsky collective farm has taken root in the new place. Orchards have been planted, and in due course of time they will bear plentiful fruit.

The winds from the east will tousle the crowns of the young apple and pear trees, the thick wheat will ripple on the irrigated fields of the Don steppe, and a new generation of communist builders will grow up here to gladden the heart of our Mother country.

Projects even more magnificent and grandiose than the Volga-Don will be accomplished. But in the minds of people, the Volga-Don will always remain the firstborn of the great construction projects. And mothers, although they do not like to admit it, always love their firstborn best.

People, my dear countrymen upon whom all the thoughts of our wise Bolshevik Party are centred, you have ample cause to rejoice in your great creations built for peace and happiness!

The plan of Russia's electrification conceived by Lenin's genius was launched by Soviet people in incredibly difficult conditions of Civil War, imperialist intervention, and economic dislocation. In the first two years, power stations with a capacity of a mere 12,000 kw were put into operation. The results so far achieved were extremely small. But, calling on the Soviet people to perform their heroic civic duty, Vladimir Ilyich said:

"Twelve thousand kilowatts is a very modest beginning. This may sound funny to the foreigner who is familiar with electrification in America, Germany, or Sweden. But he laughs best who laughs last."

We do rejoice in our great constructions, and we do smile, but without any smugness: we smile the smile of victors, the smile of people who confidently believe in mankind's coming happiness.

1952

LONG LIVE, MY PARTY!

With a feeling of profound devotion and gratitude the working people of our country are marking the 50th birthday of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In 1917, the people confidently entrusted their fate to this party, founded by the great Lenin, seeing in it their only true defender capable of realising their long-cherished dreams and hopes, and infinitely trusting in the justice of the cause it was promoting and in its unseverable blood ties with themselves, the people.

This faith in their own Party, born in the depths of the Russian revolutionary working class, inspired Soviet people to perform feats of matchless valour in the years of the Civil War and foreign armed intervention. This faith gave them the confidence and strength to overcome all the enormous difficulties and hardships of postwar rehabilitation.

In the years of Soviet power and under the guidance of the Party, the people who had become true masters of their land and thus acquired a new mentality made tremendous strides in their social, political and cultural development. Their socialist Motherland inspired in them an even more ardent patriotism, they came to love it in a new way and acquired the strength which enabled them not only to repel but actually to squash the nazi aggressors to death in the Great Patriotic War.

In fierce, bloody clashes with the enemy, the Soviet people who had been reared and tempered by the Party confirmed the prophetic words spoken by Lenin in 1919: "A nation in which the majority of the workers and peasants realise, feel and see that they are fighting for their own Soviet power, for the rule of the working people, for the cause whose victory will ensure them and their children all the benefits of culture, of all that has been created by human labour—such a nation can never be vanquished."

The Party and the people have been fused together by years of peaceful endeavour and by the blood shed in the battles for the country's freedom and independence. Could anything separate them now? No, there is no such power on earth and there never will be.

In a very short space of time after the victorious conclusion of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Union, guided by the Party, fully rehabilitated its national economy, healed the bleeding wounds inflicted on its body by the war, and became mightier than ever with an ever greater power of attraction for all progressive mankind. Our quick recovery gladdened our friends and sorely disappointed our enemies.

But what happened to those big political leaders and shabby newspaper small fry from the imperialist camp who in the war years predicted our defeat and gloatingly awaited it? What happened to those prophets who after the rout of German nazism, shouted themselves hoarse that the Soviet Union has been thrown far back by the war and that restoring its shattered economy would take scores of years and necessitate the assistance of the capitalist powers? Strangely there's no sight or sound of them, and no one knows where they are hiding their shameless eyes, dimmed with hatred for the land of socialism. The clear, open, steadfast glance of the peace-loving Soviet people does not want to meet the shifty glances of this human scum. Soviet people look confidently and calmly into the future, into our radiant tomorrow.

Today, all the thoughts and deeds of the Party and its

Central Committee are aimed at further consolidating the country's economic and defence potential, at preserving and strengthening peace in the world, and at steadily raising the living standard of the working people. By accelerating the development of the country's productive forces and by raising the technical efficiency of the labour processes through the introduction of the newest machinery on a mass scale, the Party wants to relieve the people of physical toil which until not so very long ago had lain as a heavy burden on shoulders that had always been broad and strong.

How can the people help loving and following this Party which has for fifty years been upholding and defending their vital interests, which warns them against danger, wisely directs their actions, teaches them vigilance, and always speaks with them in the plain and courageous language of truth? How can the people help loving and following a party whose concern for their welfare and happiness is the supreme law governing all its activities? And the people do love their Party with infinite devotion, they believe in the Party's clear, collective wisdom and are always ready to give full support to all its undertakings.

From the glowing heights of the historic victories they have won, the Soviet people review with justifiable pride the road they have traversed under the leadership of their standard-bearing Party. The people know that they have much more to achieve and many reverses and difficulties to overcome before they can attain their great goal of establishing a communist society. But, with complete confidence in the titanic strength and inexhaustible energy of the Communist Party, their collective leader and their vanguard, they look proudly ahead into the future where victory awaits them.

Long live my fearless Party, unaging in labours and heroic exploits!

1953

TO OUR UKRAINIAN BROTHERS

I extend my warmest congratulations to our Ukrainian brothers on the 40th anniversary of Soviet power in the Ukraine.

In the years of Soviet power my kinsmen, the people of the Ukraine, one of the most gifted and, in the past, one of the

most long-suffering people, pushed forward its economy, science and art with might and main. How many wonderful names in all fields of knowledge and crafts have been produced by the Ukraine for the glory of our country, and how many more will come to the fore from her inexhaustible sources!

From the bottom of my heart I wish every success to my beloved Ukraine and her wonderful sons and daughters!

1957

ADMIRATION AND PRIDE

(*On the flight of the world's first cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin*)

Now that's really something!

There is nothing more to be said, I am speechless from admiration and pride in the fantastic success scored by our own Soviet science.

April 12, 1961

* *

THE BEACON FOR MANKIND

Everybody who cares about the future of mankind must have carefully read the draft Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and now each one of us speaks of this historical document in his own words.

Being a writer who is obliged to think in images, I should like to say: "In the old days it was like this: if you, a wayfarer, were overtaken by nightfall on the road and saw a glimmer of a shepherd's fire far, far away on the horizon, you knew that it was so far to go, you'd fall dead from weariness before you reached it. . . ."

Now, the draft Programme makes such a bright beacon of light for all of us that all we have to do is go towards it with a firm stride, and the way won't be so very long. . . . The going will be a bit hard, of course, but is a cherished goal ever easy to attain?

Veshenskaya,
August 4, 1961

THE GREATEST FEAT

(On the spaceflight of the second cosmonaut Herman Titov)

Like every other Soviet citizen, I am dividing my profound admiration of Titov's feat into two equal shares: I bow before Herman Titov and before all those who took part in building his spaceship.

And surely we want to bow even lower before the Party which reared such a brilliant constellation of cosmonauts, scientists, designers and workers, whose creative minds and clever hands are indeed worth more than their weight in gold!

Isn't it wonderful that at this very minute the whole country, the Government, and Moscow are honouring our Motherland's true son, and that tonight our Army will give the finishing touch to these celebrations with the thunderous salvoes from its glorious guns!

August 9, 1961

THE WHOLE NATION SALUTES YOU, *PRAVDA*!

My heartiest wishes to *Pravda* on its fiftieth birthday! I am proud and glad to think that many a married couple might well envy our mutual affection which has been going strong for more than thirty years now, unmarred by so much as a hint of anything unpleasant. Mentally, I hug the whole staff.

May 5, 1962

I EMBRACE YOU WITH FATHERLY AFFECTION

(On the spaceflight of Valentina Tereshkova and Valery Bykovsky)

I realise that on this happy day what I am going to say will sound badly out of tune. But how can I help it? At my advanced age and with my somewhat conservative cast of

mind I imagined, until a few days ago, that we, men, were the "rulers of the minds", the fighters, and altogether the salt of the earth in this sublunary world of ours.

And what do we have now? A woman in space! It's inconceivable, whatever you say. It goes contrary to all my settled views on the world and its possibilities. I'd gladly hug Valery Bykovsky for his feat, after all he was born a man to perform feats. But it's quite another matter with Valentina Tereshkova.

She is receiving thousands of proposals, and I, who have been bearing the cross of matrimony for forty years, can offer her neither my heart nor my hand, and all I can do is embrace her with fatherly affection and wish her the best of everything in life. It goes without saying that I also embrace Valery Bykovsky.

1963

TO THE SHOCK WORKERS OF COMMUNIST LABOUR

Dear comrades,

Allow me to wish success to the fruitful work of your conference. This is a formal opening, and that's why it sounds so formal and dry.

Of course, tongues might be wagged successfully and fruitfully here, in Rostov, and things be bungled at home. And so when it comes to your actual work at home, at the collective farms, state farms, in every branch of agriculture, I cannot speak drily, and from the bottom of my heart I wish you success, and I beg you: my dear countrymen and countrywomen, please don't fail us.

Try your hardest, please don't disgrace our glorious region!

With hope and confidence in your future successes, I shake your hands.

1964

I GLADLY ACCEPTED THE INVITATION

I gladly accepted the invitation to visit the German Democratic Republic. I was in Germany once, in 1930, more than thirty years ago. I was on my way to Gorky in Sorrento but I never

got there because the Italian authorities refused to give me an entrance visa. While waiting for this visa, I made a tour of Germany.

In the German Democratic Republic I shall see rejuvenated towns and villages, I shall meet workers and peasants. It goes without saying that I shall meet and speak with old and young German writers whose work I try to follow as closely as possible. In one of the northern districts of the GDR there is a co-operative which has done me the honour of taking my name. I regularly correspond with the members of this co-operative and I shall try to go and visit them to see how they are getting on.

I am very sorry that I shall not be able to attend the Shevchenko celebrations in the Ukraine. I beg my Ukrainian friends to accept my very best wishes of successes, good health and happiness.

1964

COMMUNISTS OF THE QUIET DON COLLECTIVE FARM SET THEIR TARGETS

(*From a speech addressed to a collective farm Party meeting*)

The March Plenum of the Central Committee opens the broadest prospects before our collective and state farms. The older of you will probably remember the 1930s, and how we delivered the grain, brought the seeds for sowing from Millerovo in ox-drawn carts, how we crippled the oxen's legs on those impassable roads in spring, and how afterwards we were expected to use those same oxen for the ploughing and the sowing. This has now receded into the remote past. There were plenty of hardships in farming, plenty of unsettled problems, and plenty of mistakes. Everything seems to have been cleared up now. From here on it's up to us.

Last year I went to the German Democratic Republic on the invitation of the Government of the GDR, and was shown round two farms there. Both these farms rank high in the republic. The one which is managed by Comrade Wulf, member of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, is a very large, mechanised enterprise, from which one

can learn a lot. The other is a less prosperous farm, and the lands on which it is located are not very fertile. The soil is as sandy as it is here, outside Veshenskaya. So they mainly go in for stock-raising.

This year our German friends will come for a stay with us in Veshensky district. Both Comrade Wulf and Lother Koch, the chairman of the second farm, are coming. I expect they'll bring their best workers along.

We're hospitable people, and we'll give them a hearty welcome.

You tell me that your Party organisation will make a good infantry company. You have close on a hundred full members and thirty candidate members. That's a huge force. Add the Komsomol members to this number, and then with a strength like that you'll be able to move mountains!

The prospects are clear enough. Our tasks are pretty clear, too. Your farm is well-equipped with machines. Oh well, the two or three lorries which Comrade Maksayev has spoken about should not present much of a problem, and I think we'll procure them. Machines are not all I have in mind just now. In this respect you have never been denied help. I think that this year will be a turning point for this district, for many farms, in fact for all the farms in the Soviet Union. Because the decisions adopted by the Plenum are very sound with full account taken of both our possibilities and our requirements. For instance, it's a wonderful idea to raise the purchase prices. It's perfectly natural, of course, that we must first of all endeavour to fulfil the plan which apparently will not be too burdensome. In order to replenish the collective farm coffers, you must make an effort to sell the state some produce over and above plan....

Allow me to express my confidence in you and my best wishes for a successful conclusion of the whole cycle of farming jobs, and above all else I wish you good spring sowing. Spring is almost on us, there's very little time left. I'm sure you understand this better than I do as you are immediately involved. Certainly, you'll have to sweat a bit and go short on sleep. But you must do everything to finish the sowing within the shortest possible space of time and on a high level of efficiency too.

1965

HANDS OF GLEZOS!

As a writer who holds the Greek people in profound esteem, I want to say to the ruling military junta in Greece: Hands off Manolis Glezos. It will be the worse for you afterwards. Think better of it!

April 29, 1967

GREATNESS OF THE SOUL

The history of people inhabiting the planet, and the development of their national cultures contain, amongst the cruel, tragic happenings, some precious testimonies of people uniting together in the name of noble aims, testimonies of a powerful upsurge of the human spirit. The finest pages in the truthful chronicles of the destinies of nations and in the history of countries are devoted to the struggle for progress, for freedom, for a better future.

In the case of every nation this struggle, the fashioning of the future and the development of the national culture, took place and is taking place in very different conditions. It is therefore very natural that peoples in the world today should be seeking better and more fruitful mutual understanding.

Despite the intrigues and pressure of those forces which for their own mercenary ends would like to disunite the nations, our fast moving life is revealing more and more distinctly that which is common to all nations, irrespective of their different histories, and which helps to unite and consolidate their noble efforts.

Human thought probes with profound respect the effort made for a nation by its great sons, and the ideals which inspired their struggle, their dedicated life. One such outstanding figure in the history of mankind was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi).

In the book dedicated to the birth centenary of this outstanding figure in the national liberation movement of India, I, a Soviet writer and one of the many contributors to this book, am naturally not going to tell Indian readers about Gandhi's life and his rich literary legacy, nor about his incessant seekings and the complex evolution of his views. The other authors,

contributing to this book, who have a special knowledge of the subject will write about it. As for myself, I should like to speak with the Indian readers only about those features in Gandhi, the social and political leader, which appeal most strongly to me, as they also do to a great many Soviet people. And so I am by no means making an all-embracing study of Gandhi, which I would never venture to undertake, and am simply sharing with the readers of this book my thoughts on some of the aspects of his versatile activity.

Can anyone overlook the amazing fact of the closeness between Gandhi and Russia's great writer Tolstoi? This is a striking example showing that, for all the enormous difference of historical conditions in which lived the people of India and Russia, the possibility of a link appeared even then, the possibility of an alliance in the name of progress. I shall only mention here Tolstoi's work "A Letter to India" which was highly appreciated by Gandhi. I am not speaking of the essence and significance of Gandhi's and Tolstoi's philosophical theories, I only want to say what it was that impelled them to seek ways and means of struggle both in philosophy and in their practical activity. Protest against oppression, an ability to feel the pain and suffering of their own and also of a foreign people—this is what prompted their seekings, and this is what brought together the two Titans: the dedicated fighter for the liberation of India, and the great Russian humanist writer.

I trust readers in India will not take me wrong. I trust they won't think that here is a communist writer trying to force his own point of view on them and twisting facts to suit his ends. I am not trying to force anything on anyone. I am simply sharing my reflections, my thoughts.

How could I, sensing the urgent demand of my time, not peer with the keenest attention into such distinct traits in Gandhi's personality as non-acceptance of racism, of racist ideas about superiority of some nations over others, or traits like his noble intolerance of racial and colonial oppression? Gandhi's statement that he rejects the kind of patriotism which tries to rise at the expense of the misery or exploitation of other nations deserves respect and profound attention.

For long years Gandhi struggled against enmity and discord engendered by different religious creeds. This struggle must have also been dictated by the principles on which his ethical conception was based, and his ideas on the general laws of morality. In practice, however, this struggle acquired

a new, tremendous, urgently vital, patriotic and political meaning: it countered the desire of the colonialists to act in accordance with the behests of their remote predecessors—the Ancient Roman enslavers of nations—whose principle was "divide and rule".

One of the main causes of his life was to eradicate those centuries-old traditional dogmas which gave rise to that frightful phenomenon in the life of India which Gandhi himself called the "evil of untouchability". Let us remember that the caste of pariahs, the "untouchables", comprised close on twenty per cent of the population. If Gandhi had not succeeded in accomplishing his civic feat, a huge social stratum would have been excluded from the national struggle for India's liberation from the colonial yoke. And the goal which Gandhi called Swaraj (self-rule) could not have been attained.

And what of the struggle which Gandhi waged for the emancipation of Indian women? In women, who made up a good half of the population, he saw a potential social force of great consequence. He tried to rally all the forces of his country, of the nation, for the struggle for freedom, so that Swaraj, that longed-for goal, should become reality.

It is not surprising that Jawaharlal Nehru gave Gandhi such a proud characteristic of "a symbol of India's determination to attain freedom", saying that he "instinctively felt the pulse of the people".

Gandhi wanted the music of the spinning wheel to sound in every Indian home. Apart from a striving to give work to everyone, there was possibly an underestimation of the importance of the country's industrial development in this position of his. But then we must not forget that he believed that if the people had a sufficiency of cloth, woven by millions of hands, they would be able to say "no" to the colonialists in response to their attempts to consolidate their rule with the help of a textile "incursion".

Thus, in practically everything he did Gandhi showed that he was doggedly and, in his own way, consistently opposed to the colonial system, and that he was a man who passionately loved his country, whose freedom and independence was the cause of his life.

Yes, Gandhi strove for a "peaceful revolution" accomplished by non-violent methods. We too, in our country, tried to accomplish the revolution with the smallest possible losses and without a civil war. The non-peaceful course of our revolution's development was forced on our working people by the internal

counter-revolution and the armed intervention of fourteen imperialist powers whose aim was to suppress freedom and put out the flame of our revolution.

They were two different courses. For all that, we cannot but appreciate Gandhi's faith in the strength of the broad masses. Revolution is always a movement of the broadest masses, of course. Nor can we fail to appreciate the fact that the logic of struggle brought Gandhi to the slogan which lashed out at the colonialists: "Get out of India!"

People will never forget that when the Second World War broke out, Gandhi came out against fascism and expressed his profound sympathy with the Soviet people. He was one of those who raised his voice in protest against the atomic bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who called for a ban on atomic weapons, a peaceful settlement of outstanding problems, and general disarmament.

Gandhi's life was an incessant search: a search for truth, for his own concept of morality, for specific methods of political struggle, and for philosophical principles. The complexity and diversity of his seekings reflected the complexity of India's historical development.

The people of India have called Gandhi "Mahatma"—a beautiful word which means "a great soul". The soul of this worthy son of the people was at its greatest, I think, in those of its manifestations where it absorbed and reflected the seekings of India's people—their patriotic strivings for freedom and independence.

A soul like that is truly great.

1968

Part II

The Writer

THE WRITER AND THE CRITIC MUST DO AN HONEST JOB

Many of the Soviet writers (among them the author of the present lines) tend to overuse local vernacular. Most of us are also subject in a larger or lesser measure to other literary lapses as well. But only F. Panferov has had the "courage" to assert his right to write badly and, what is more, urge budding authors to do the same.

Everybody knows about the fiasco which befell Panferov when in his concluding speech at the discussion of *Bruski* he imprudently stated that he wrote in the "language of millions". There would perhaps be no need to say more about Panferov who has been sufficiently severely criticised by Gorky, if he did not have such a multitude of followers who are cluttering up literature with their anti-artistic, illiteral and vapid writings, if Panferov who claims the role of "literary leader" did not try to head this company of literary bunglers, and if Panferov himself did not write according to the principle that: "If five out of every hundred words are good and ninety-five are bad, it's good enough."

That is precisely how his *Bruski* is written. To prove my point there is no need to multiply the examples cited by Gorky of Panferov's lack of literacy for a man of culture, his careless use of words, and his ignorance. Anyone can do this himself by carefully rereading the three parts of *Bruski.*

It is not my purpose to make a critical analysis of Panferov's work, and what I am concerned with is this: how could it be that before the appearance of Gorky's article none of the critics had seen those glaring imperfections in which *Bruski* abounds? How could it be that an author, widely known at home and abroad, has been putting out one book after another and all these books were full of literary flaws?

Undoubtedly, the critics did see these flaws, but if they mentioned them at all, it was in indistinct, muffled voices, while

the majority just sang continual paeans of unreserved praise and, not being particularly inventive in the composition of eulogies, they chose the very simple device of extolling Panferov as another Balzac, as another Uspensky, and so on, in order to convince the readers at all costs that *Bruski* simply brimmed over with all sorts of merits.

The article by Vasilkovsky in *Literaturny Kritik* No. 4, 1933, is a striking example of such laudatory criticism. The author of this article is out to establish Panferov's claim to literary immortality. It does not worry him that his article will leave the reader little the wiser as to what is good and what is bad in the third part of *Bruski*, or wherein lies Panferov's strength and wherein his weakness. One has the impression that the article was written not for the readers but just for Panferov alone. A sort of madrigal in prose.

Vasilkovsky makes no effort to help Panferov overcome his shortcomings. Did someone say not all was well with Panferov's language? To this Vasilkovsky has a prompt and comforting answer: "Panferov's language is said to be heavy. Well, such is the language of Volga peasants. It would be funny if Nikita Guryanov spoke in stylised prose."

What peerless naiveté! As if anyone meant the language of Panferov's characters.

Did someone say not all was well with the plot? Here, too, the obliging Vasilkovsky forestalls the objection in order to shield the author of *Bruski*, by saying: "There is little plot in the book. But this is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Read Balzac's *Peasants*. There's hardly any plot there either."

And then, when he says that Panferov sometimes acts like his hero Nikita Guryanov who, as everyone knows, brought home a bench from the village club, saying to himself: "It might come in handy for sitting on, or something," Vasilkovsky writes:

"Panferov likewise brings in a lot of facts, just in case, making his book all the heavier."

Do you think it's a rebuke coming from a fault-finding critic? Not at all. Three lines further down Vasilkovsky fully justifies this peasant thriftiness and, what is more, gives his argument a solid basis.

He writes: "Let us refer to Heine once again. 'Goethe's greatest merit,' wrote Heine, 'lies, in fact, in the completeness of all that he portrayed. He does not combine perfectly good details with poor ones, a completely finished picture with a pencil sketch, he has no timidity whatsoever.... He describes

each character in his dramas and novels as fully as if it were the main one. It is the same with Homer, and also with Shakespeare.' "

Not bad, eh? Now, try saying that our criticism is not yet thorough....

True, there's no denying that there is a certain amount of "objectivity" in Vasilkovsky's review. On page 54 he says:

"The future critic, as he leafs through the third part of *Bruski* again and again, will, no doubt, judge it differently, and perhaps more strictly."

It's up to the future critic to "judge it differently", and in the meantime Vasilkovsky concludes his article with the statement that *Bruski* is an impressive monument to our great revolutionary epoch, and ends up with never a blush:

"Panferov is working on the fourth part of his novel. He will produce many more volumes (15 or 20, and it's not the critic's flight of fancy) and then collectivisation will have its own *Human Comedy*".

Oh well, as regards the monument, there are monuments and monuments, as everyone knows. I am profoundly convinced that Vasilkovsky's article will also be regarded by the coming generations as a solid monument of a past day when critics wrote irresponsible articles. Everyone is free to express his good wishes, of course, but it was Vasilkovsky's duty as a critic to warn Panferov frankly and honestly that if he made good Vasilkovsky's wish and wrote another 15 or 20 volumes like he wrote the first three parts of *Bruski* it would no longer be a subject for literary discussion, but a veritable natural calamity.

In that same issue of *Literaturny Kritik* there was an article by Kornely Zelinsky entitled "The Interests of the Profession". Lamenting the fact that knowledge of life is mainly gleaned by critics from the newspapers, Zelinsky writes:

"Is it possible to competently analyse Gladkov's *Energy*, for instance, without having a first-hand knowledge of the construction on the Dnieper? It is easy enough to offer Gladkov a number of linguistic suggestions. But the impact of the artistic image, its educative and political role, can be fully established only after the artistic image has been linked with reality."

And further on he says:

"The third part of Panferov's *Bruski* has come out. There is nothing for a taster or an assessor to do here. To earn the right to analyse this book the critic must have a good knowledge of the collectivisation movement, of village life and the

collective farmer, he must know the Party and the work it does in the countryside. Are there many such universally educated men among our professional critics?"

Surely Zelinsky cannot seriously suggest that language is a matter of such minor importance that writing only about language is beyond the dignity of a self-respecting critic? A short, businesslike article, that may seem "one-sided" on the surface of it, will be much more helpful to the author and the reader than a verbose, all-embracing, and very often pseudo-scholarly critique. Also, it is time we stopped treating books as the personal matter of their authors, and the work of the critic as that of an intermediary who stands neither to gain nor to lose from the success or failure of the book he is reviewing. I incline towards a different view of the work of a critic who does not belong to the category of the "universally educated". It goes without saying that it would be far better if he knew reality well and had seen life with his own eyes. But if he has not, let him at least write about the language of the book, let him help the author, if only in this way, to make his books ring with a fuller, finer sound.

The author will be grateful even for this help. And not at all because, as the saying goes, getting a tuft of wool from a mangy sheep is better than nothing, but simply because we writers in our overwhelming majority have still a far from perfect command of the language. Besides, in literature it is the same as in construction just now: no one can stand and look on, doing nothing, critics especially. If you don't have the necessary knowledge go and learn, and in the meantime, if you are not capable of more, hand up the bricks at least.

One of the main reasons for the increasing literary spoilage is the absence of honest, serious and responsible criticism. Critics should long have cultivated these essential qualities and shouldered at least part of the responsibility which the writer must bear for his inferior output. It is only with the criminal connivance of the critics that an inferior book can run into several editions and, what is more, serve as a guide for beginners in the literary field.

The second reason for the growth of literary spoilage is the "guild" attitude which continues to flourish even after the Decision of the Central Committee of April 23. And it would be a good idea for Panferov, who never tires of kicking the dissolved Russian Association of Proletarian Writers, to seriously reconsider the matter of the creative grouping which

he himself heads. If this grouping had not adopted the policy of a mutual admiration society, his *Bruski* would have been written on a much higher artistic level. In any case, it would not have those "slips" to which Gorky has drawn the author's attention.

The article by A. S. Serafimovich "On Writers, Those Who Have Been Prettied Up and Those Who Have Not", which throbs with an urgent desire to justify Panferov's inferior work, was deservedly criticised in a *Literaturnaya Gazeta* editorial and also in Gorky's open letter. One can feel nothing but dismay at Serafimovich's admiration of the image in the third part of *Bruski* which he cites as proof of that notorious "muzhik strength" which, according to Serafimovich, is rooted in Panferov:

" 'Why, man, you have a horse sitting on its rump beside the fence and it's chewing that fence!' Stop and think about the meaning of this image. How much has been said, and how tersely! A horse sitting on its rump? Why, you'll never forget it, never, and it's frightening!" exclaims Serafimovich.

It's not this, it's the image itself that's frighteningly contrived, improbable, and plainly illiterate. An emaciated horse does not sit, it lies down, and when it sits (which, by the way, it only does when it tries to get up) it does not eat. If a horse has not the strength to get up and stand, it is raised up and then suspended. So it's not an image, it's another "slip of the pen". The idea of a horse "chewing" the fence is just as baffling, except to those, perhaps, who see no difference between the words "nibbling" and "chewing".

Gorky is right a thousand times over when he says: "Someone edits, someone publishes these tons of verbal waste, some irresponsible people praise the output of these irresponsible botchers, obviously praising them because they don't know better or because they have personal reasons."

I think, it was not so much ties of friendship as his "guild" sympathies that made Alexander Serafimovich praise and justify Panferov's inferior work. He acted against his conscience in his old age. And he should not have.

The time has come to talk about literature in a straight, fearless way, and to call a spade a spade. We need authentically new words, created by the Revolution, we need novel forms, and new books describing the greatest epoch in the history of mankind. But we, writers, will only be able to produce books worthy of the epoch when we have learnt to bring new words into literature and write books not according

to Panferov's recipe but contrary to it: with 95 of every 100 words excellent, and the remaining 5 good, and also when innovation will have advanced beyond such elementary tricks as calling a chapter not a chapter but a "salvo", a "link" and suchlike.

When our critics stop their liberal gushing over a writer and their patronisingly avuncular attitude towards him ("he may be a snivelling punk, but he's mine" sort of thing); when criticism becomes genuinely revolutionary, merciless and stern, facing the truth squarely, when this happens the "guild" barkers will stop shouting at all the literary crossroads, praising "their own" writers and slandering the others who do not belong to their creed.

Only given these conditions we shall be able to make good the numerous, widely broadcast promises which we gave to our Soviet readers. Otherwise, we shall remain the "honest windbags" we are, the creators of mediocre literature.

1934

TO THE ENGLISH READERS

(Foreword to the English publication of "And Quiet Flows the Don")

I am glad that my novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* has been warmly received by the English readers and the press. I am especially pleased because England is the homeland of great writers who have deposited many valuables in the treasure-store of world literature, and whose immortal works have helped to cultivate the taste of English readers.

It worries me somewhat that in England my novel is perceived as an "exotic" story. I would be happy if the English reader would discern in the description of the Don Cossacks' life, which seems so foreign to Europeans, the colossal changes which have taken place in life, in everyday acitivities and human psychology as a result of the First World War and the Revolution.

The task I have set myself is not merely to show the different social strata of the Don population at the time of World War I and the Revolution, nor merely to trace the tragic destinies of men and women caught in the mighty maelstrom of events which took place between 1914 and 1921, but also

to show these people in the years of peaceful construction under Soviet power. It is to this task that I have devoted my last book *Virgin Soil Upturned.*

In conclusion I should like to say the following: in English press reviews I often hear myself rebuked for my "cruel" portrayal of reality. Some critics also spoke of the "cruelty of Russian mores" in general.

In the former case I accept the rebuke, for I think that a writer who varnishes reality to the detriment of truth and spares the feelings of his readers because he wants to adapt himself to them, is a bad writer. My novel is not one of those books people read during their after-dinner siesta, and the sole purpose of which is to help digestion.

As for Russian mores, I doubt that they are more cruel than those of any other nation's. And were not those cultured nations more cruel and inhuman who, in 1918-1920, hurled their armies against my tortured Motherland and tried by force of arms to impose their will on the Russian people?

1934

LITERATURE IS PART OF THE GENERAL PROLETARIAN CAUSE

(From a speech addressed to a meeting of shock workers of the Lenzavod Factory and the Rostov Railway Junction)

First of all, comrades, allow me to convey the heartiest greetings of the Union of Soviet Writers to the proletarians of the Lenzavod factory and the Rostov Railway Junction who have written one of the most wonderful pages into the history of the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of Russia.

Today, during the meeting with the old workers of Lenzavod, I remembered one of Comrade Lenin's remarkable thoughts which he once voiced in the form of a wish that "literature should become part of the general proletarian cause". This wish is now coming true. And the most striking illustration of this is the tremendously keen attention with which the working class followed the literary discussion on language which was started off by Gorky's article. Further, and even more convincing confirmation of the fact that in our day and in our epoch, literature has indeed become part of the general

proletarian cause was provided by the enormous interest which the working class and the entire Soviet population took in the work of the All-Union Congress of Writers held a month ago.

I think that the increasing number of copies in which our books are published—and the size of the impressions seemed absolutely fantastic to the foreign authors who attended the congress—should not be the only indication of our readers' cultural advancement.

Readers are in daily contact with us, writers, and this testifies more impressively than anything else to their cultural level. I must say that I know it from my own experience: every single day I receive at least ten letters from my readers who have something to say about *Virgin Soil Upturned* and the characters in it. Some of these letters have been much more helpful to me, a writer who has more or less mastered the trade, than the articles of well-established critics.

When I was working on *And Quiet Flows the Don* I kept in close touch with the Leningrad regional union of metalworkers, and their comments, which arrived in hundreds, very much helped me to understand and correct those errors to which I was subject when writing my first books. It is my considered opinion that the link between the worker readers and the writers of the Soviet Union is a strong guarantee that our literature will continue to be the leading literature of the world.

I do not want to confine myself to simply telling you about what happened at the writers' congress, as I imagine that many of you—the majority certainly—carefully followed the work of the congress and are familiar with the main reports. What I want to speak about is literature, since literature has become part of the general proletarian cause.

Lenzavod and the Rostov Railway Junction have a lot of people contributing regularly to the newspapers—something like six hundred, I believe. I am profoundly convinced that from the midst of these worker correspondents who with their pen are helping industry as a whole and your plant and railway in particular to eradicate shortcomings, there will emerge dozens of outstanding writers and poets who will overtake us and leave us far behind.

The discussion on language which began before the congress showed that the worker readers have made great strides even as compared to 1926-27, less than ten years ago, that they have become much more particular as regards style and have

developed such a taste for reading that we, writers, very often fail to satisfy their requirements. What I should like to say here is the following: considering that the cultural level of the working class has risen immeasurably, and considering that in their letters to us, in the critical articles they send to the magazines, and in their speeches at meetings, the workers speak of higher-quality books as the essential problem, I believe that literary discussions, not in the abstract sense but discussions of books which at the moment are regarded as the leading works of Soviet literature, would be extremely useful, especially for some writers, and for you, our readers.

The congress of Soviet writers, which enjoyed the exceptional attention of the Soviet and world working public, summed up our achievements to date. It must be said that the watershed dividing world literature was very distinctly revealed at the congress. And evidence was furnished of the steady rise of our Soviet literature and the decline of bourgeois literature, unanimously mentioned by the delegates from West European countries. I should not like to cite any examples pointing to the decline of art in the West, as you can find all the examples you want in our daily press. You know that books are burnt in the fascist countries, and that thousands of books, among them translations of Soviet authors, are to be destroyed under the new law of the Austrian government. You know from what the Chinese authoress said at the congress that Chinese revolutionary writers who call the masses of workers and peasants to struggle against the enslavers of their vast country have their books thrown out of the libraries by way of punishment, and what is more, these writers are put in prison and end their lives on the scaffold.

This watershed, so strikingly revealed at the congress, shows two worlds confronting each other in the sphere of art. And already now it is perfectly obvious that our Soviet art is winning through everywhere in the world. This was evidenced by the West European writers who took the floor, and more particularly by Franz Weisskopf, a German communist writer. He said that it was from the works of Soviet writers that the German proletariat, suffering under fascist domination, learns the meaning of class struggle and how to fight the enemies to attain the triumph of world revolution and of the noble ideas of communism everywhere on earth. Weisskopf went on to say that German readers learn from books by Soviet authors devoted to the peasant theme what a struggle was fought by our Party, our working class, and the progressive part of the peasantry to in-

troduce large-scale collective farming in place of small private farming with its dog-eat-dog mentality.

It would not be bad at all if at this first meeting, which I hope will not be the last, we could establish certain reader-writer relations and help each other to understand some questions which to this day remain unsolved.

The discussion on literary language, begun on the subject of Panferov's *Bruski*, showed up our weak points and disclosed that in our eagerness for topical subject matter and our desire to reflect our amazing epoch in our books we often forget about quality and produce inferior works. Gorky was quite right to say: "If a worker employed in industry does a poor job and produces spoilage it is considered a crime, he is held up to shame in the press and condemned by public opinion, then why is it that in the case of a writer who produces goods of inferior quality we confine ourselves to a light critical spanking, a punishment which does not impress writers much anyway? Why do we not adopt stronger measures in the case of a writer who can but does not want to take more pains with his work?"

And what are these stronger measures?

First and foremost it is your sound opinion which will compel the writer to go over the same problems a thousand times, to ponder every turn of speech, to think well over the message and the construction of his story or novel, to try and give his book a powerful evocativeness that would rouse people to struggle, and inspire them to deeds of valour, honour and heroism. I am sure that your voice, the voice of reading workers, will be the decisive one here.

There is something else I want to say, once we're talking about literature. For some time now there has existed a peculiar attitude among readers which is essentially wrong and which confuses the writers. Let us suppose you are reading, say, Ilyenkov's *The Main Axis*. Not a bad novel which attempts to show the life of the large staff of a locomotive-building plant. True, the novel has its faults which Gorky pointed out to the author, it was hotly debated in literary circles when it came out, but, I should say, it has not yet been properly appreciated by the Soviet reading public as a whole. Well then, you're reading this novel, and you say: "Isn't it wonderful that here's an author who thought it worth his while to write about us, workers of the locomotive-building plant! He's described the Party cell, an old worker in his family life and at the plant, but why has he said nothing about the relations between town

and village?" Many readers and critics tend to present the same sort of claim to every book that comes out. If it's a story about a collective farm, they will say: "The author has given a true picture of the Party cell, the activities of the Komsomol and the Party, and the growing social standing of women, but then how could he ignore co-operation and say never a word about it?"

There's a good saying which people should really bear in mind: the most beautiful girl can't give more than she has. There's one more: a man cannot whistle and drink at the same time.

Yet people often place unreasonable demands upon the writers, forgetting that there probably isn't a writer in the world who could embrace all the happenings, all the changes, and all the developments taking place in our country every day, every hour, and render them in their great diversity of aspects. The factory you describe today will be unrecognisable a year hence, and every writing person may land in the same awkward position as Eisenstein with his film which was to be called *The General Line*. He started making this film in 1928-29 when the Party was making every effort to knock the peasant farmsteads together into midget collective farms. Money was expended on the undertaking, credits were granted, and agricultural associations were set up, as single instances, it is true. This was the "general line" of that particular period. In 1930, while Eisenstein was still shooting his film, large-scale collectivisation was launched. The picture was behind times and there was no point in it any more.

The same thing happens to us, writers. I started writing my *Virgin Soil Upturned* in 1930, hot on the heels of the happenings which radically changed the rural world: the elimination of the kulaks as a class, large-scale collectivisation, and the mass movement of the peasantry to unite into collective farms.

With these impressions fresh in my memory, I sat down to write my novel. But when I finished the first part I realised that what I was describing was no longer the basic concern of the moment, that other problems were now uppermost in the minds of my readers, and especially the collective farm readers I was writing about. Keeping up with events is what makes our task so difficult.

And now, a word about the quality of literary output. After the congress, each one of us felt urgently confronted by the question: how to write better books? Attending the congress, apart from the writers, were people representing the reading masses,

the collective farmers, the industrial workers, and the Red Army. They took the floor and one after another presented their claims and, honestly speaking, the total account was so enormous that we'll hardly be able to settle it in the foreseeable future. They said that we were not doing a good job, that we did not take sufficient pains with our language, and that beginners, of whom there are a great number, would find it very hard to learn anything from our books, if at all. And indeed, young writers emerge from every factory, from every collective farm, and we are anxious for them to master the craft, as they are the people who, with our help and support, will replace us. We are largely responsible for their development. And what do we do? We do not merely produce inferior books with little literary merits and thereby retard the growth of the young writers, but we actually exert a harmful influence on the education of our young generation.

Readers quite legitimately questioned the writers' overuse of swear words which, we are glad to note, are not so much in usage among the workers any longer, and are, in fact, a disgraceful survival of the past. Very often our writers (including myself) thought it made the dialogue more true-to-life, forgetting that our books are read not only by adults who will take the levity with a smile, but also by boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen who adopt turns of speech and "bad words" they find in books. I think this question should be given thought by every writer.

All of us should seriously ponder and ponder again the question of how we can best serve the working class and our Party, by what means must we portray our great epoch, how can we enhance the impact of our books so that they would sound like a tocsin not just to readers in our country but also abroad, so that they would charge our Soviet readers with energy for further endeavour, and help the proletarians of Western Europe and the oppressed peoples in the colonial and semicolonial countries to free themselves from the capitalist yoke.

These new tasks raise another problem: a young working-class writer emerges from our midst, and we tell him to learn from the classics, but he will also borrow the manner of writing from us. And here, speaking of new and better books, and particularly in relation to the budding writers, I want to say this: the priority requirement facing all of us, beginners and experienced writers, is a thorough study of our material.

This is a point of paramount importance, and I think we ought to focus our attention on it at the present meeting if

only because you, our worker readers, can do a lot to help writers to avoid factual mistakes.

The other day I read a story by an author who is an industrial worker, and in it he says that fluffy yellow goslings were waddling about in the middle of August, and that the collective farmers received payment in grain before they ever started threshing. The man who has written this does not know that payment on account is not made before rye, the first cereal to ripen, has been threshed, and that yellow goslings don't waddle about in August. A collective farmer, reading this sort of literature, will think: "My, what writers there are! You can't trust them."

Remembering the books we have read, every one of us here will recall instances where an author described production and the world of workers, of which he had only a superficial knowledge and the details and fine points of which he did not trouble to find out. A book will not be a real work of literature if the author does not first make a thorough study of his material.

You have a literary group at the works and also the institute of quality inspectors—people who have attained the heights of their particular skill and have brilliant command of their tools. In describing one or another detail, your young authors should seek the help of these experienced older men who are certainly watching the quality of the books produced. On our part, we writers appeal to the veteran workers: please do us a great favour and help your young authors, and we shall also do our part.

I firmly believe that the contact established between worker readers and Soviet writers will be strengthened, and I further believe that only provided there is this contact Soviet literature will produce better and better books....

1934

HE WILL BE A MODEL OF COURAGE FOR MILLIONS

Death has snatched from the ranks of Soviet writers the most courageous and the staunchest fighter of all. Though physically defeated by illness and suffering terribly, he continued till his last dying breath to fight for the triumph of his Party's noble ideas with the weapon of a communist writer. Millions of peo-

ple will learn from the example of Ostrovsky how to live, how to fight, how to conquer, and how to love one's Motherland.

We are proud of our country, our Party, and the Komsomol for rearing such a wonderful person. He will be remembered with affection, gratitude and admiration.

Great is the loss we have borne.

December 23, 1936

ABOUT THE SOVIET WRITER

Captain Angel Antem, a member of the Spanish delegation, wanted to know how Soviet authors were remunerated for their work.

I have had to reply to this question time and again during my trips to Western Europe. And every time I explained in great detail the fundamental difference between Soviet and bourgeois authors. By pampering venal authors capitalism corrupts even the honest ones. Naturally, I do not mean those anti-fascist writers who have tied up their destiny with the struggle for democracy and progress.

The conditions in which a bourgeois writer is placed cultivate in him the traits of individualism, pushing to the background the social significance of literary work. And in this, he is the antipode of a Soviet writer.

One cannot picture a Soviet writer isolated from the Soviet nutrient medium. The ambitions of some of our pre-revolutionary authors seem very naive to us now. To own a villa on the Black Sea, to own a limousine.... Truly, all this has nothing in common with our dreams, our ideals.

The relations between the Soviet writer and the Soviet public may be traced from my own life story.

I, a resident of Veshenskaya *stanitsa* in Upper Don, fought in the Civil War for the victory of Soviet power. I was born and bred by Soviet power and the Bolshevik Party. I am a son of the Soviet people. And the care lavished on me by Soviet power can only be likened to a mother's loving care for her son.

Captain Antem also wanted to know why the Union of Soviet Writers was not a member of the Pen Club. The answer is simple. There are fascists among the membership of the Pen Club. And we, Soviet writers, cannot join a literary organisation where fascists are feeling at home.

In this connection, I should like to say a few words about the Soviet writers' attitude to the heroic struggle of the Spanish people against fascism and reaction.

I recall how in the House of Commons a certain member, touching upon the scandalous stand of the Non-Intervention Committee, declared sorrowfully that he was disappointed in the activity of this committee.

"Disappointed" is a verb that falls strangely on our ear, and it is entirely foreign to our usage in the present relation. We are shocked by the policy of the London committee which has turned non-interference into a screen for the factual blockade of republican Spain. Our hearts seethe with indignation when we see the tactics of interminable concessions granted to the interventionists under the mask of "humanistic" resolutions.

We are watching the heroic struggle of republican Spain with unremitting attention. And we are deeply perturbed by developments such as the events which took place in Catalonia a short while ago when Trotskyite-fascist elements, provoking certain groups of anarchists to action, attempted to organise a mutiny in the rear of the republican front with the aim of undermining the Popular Front.

One cannot help thinking of our own revolution here. Everyone knows that Soviet power waged an uncompromising struggle against the enemies of the working class, and we won because we ruthlessly smashed and routed all traitors to the cause.

Whatever corner of the Soviet Union the delegation of the Spanish people might visit during their sojourn in the USSR your heroic comrades will everywhere meet a profoundly interested attitude towards the events in Spain and a genuine, warm sympathy for the republican fighters. I live in Veshenskaya and I often have to hear the Cossack men and women saying in their artless, sincere manner that the noble struggle of the Spanish people for their independence is very close to their hearts.

Our people hate fascists, those modern cannibals, with a mortal hatred.

Our people feel an affectionate concern for their brothers who are at the frontline fighting against the fascist reaction. We have faith in your victory, comrades! Our hearts and our sympathies are always with you.

1937

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PEOPLE

Suleiman Stalsky belonged to that category of people's poets in the literal sense of the word who were reared by the people but did not win recognition until after the establishment of Soviet power.

The thoughts of his countrymen, their joys and sorrows, acquired the melodious, enchantingly fresh and ingenuous form of song-poems. Enriched by the talent of the poet, they went back into the thick of the people, to live forever.

But Stalsky's poetry was appreciated not only in his home up in the mountains. Who of us, reading his lines that were admittedly somewhat devaluated in translation, did not exult in their amazing beauty and eloquence? That is why the news of his death wrings our hearts so.

Together with all the other Soviet writers and Suleiman Stalsky's numerous readers I bow before the remains of this most gifted of poets who was a true spokesman for the people.

1937

A BOLSHEVIK WRITER

On January 19th we are going to celebrate the 75th birthday of Alexander Serafimovich. To think that Serafimovich is 75! What an attractive, manly old age to have! When you are with him you cannot believe that this man can be anywhere near 75, he is so hale, hearty and sociable! In his company you always feel as if you're of an age.

I am very fond of the old man. He is a real artist, and a big person whose books we all know and like so well. Serafimovich belongs to that generation of writers from whom we, younger ones, learnt. I owe him a great personal debt since he was the first to give me support as a writer at the beginning of my literary career, and he was the first to tell me a word of encouragement and recognition.

I shall never forget 1925 when Serafimovich, after reading my first collection of short stories, wrote a very warm preface for it and, what is more, said he'd like to see me. We met for the first time in the House of Soviets. Serafimovich assured me that I had the makings of a writer. He counselled me to go on writing and learning to work very seriously on every piece I wrote, and never to hurry.

I have always tried to act on his advice.

Five years ago, the Party, the Government and Soviet public organisations marked Serafimovich's 70th birthday. Serafimovich tried to put us all off, saying that when a person grew old it was a sad fact, and old age was nothing to celebrate. I think we, Soviet writers, will disagree with Serafimovich here if only because his *The Iron Flood* was the first major novel about the Civil War. We had nothing else in those years. And his *The Iron Flood* has remained among the best works of Soviet literature.

But it is not only with his *The Iron Flood* that Serafimovich has endeared himself to us. Serafimovich is one of those Bolshevik writers of the older generation who managed to carry his faith in all its purity through the murk of reaction, remaining loyal to the revolution and the working class in those hardest years when many people betrayed the proletariat. Did not his novel *A Town in the Steppe* or his numerous short stories give us an authentic picture of old Russia?

Serafimovich has lived a long, big life. He has been in tsarist prisons and in exile. He was acquainted with Lenin's elder brother who attempted to assassinate Alexander III. As a *Pravda* correspondent, Serafimovich went to all the fronts of the Civil War.

He is still as vigorous and spruce as he was five or ten years ago. There must be something which keeps this indefatigable old man so young in spirit making him impervious to time.

I remember Serafimovich's arrival in Veshenskaya. He stayed with me for several days. No matter how cold the water was in the Don, he never cancelled his daily swim. I marvelled at the tireless, inexhaustible energy of this man, always carefully shaved, and refreshed after his bathe.

What a youthful soul he has!

1938

From A SPEECH MADE AT THE 18TH PARTY CONGRESS

Comrades,

I felt nervous as I mounted this rostrum. The reason for my feeling nervous is that I have the notoriety of an author of voluminous and, to my regret, unfinished novels. And so I was thinking that as soon as the chairman announced my name

as the next speaker, you would say: "Oho, that's that Sholokhov person who writes at great length and never finishes his books. He'll probably go on talking until the chairman reminds him of the time limit." And having thought this, you will start sneaking away quietly. Well then, before you have left your seats I hasten to assure you that I shall speak briefly and will finish before the bell goes. If even this short speech of mine will seem too lengthy, please just move about a little and I'll quickly round it off....

I am going to speak about literature and a little about paper—these two allied spheres of art and industry.

I listened to the speakers before me with envy. Whatever they spoke about, be it coal, grain, oil, or sugar beet, they cited figures and percentages, and from these everyone could see how much work has been done. Literature, on the other hand, is a matter that has only a remote relation to figures and percentages. And here I am, standing before you with empty hands, and nothing tangible to fall back on....

Comrades, I think there is no need to speak here about our output—the books which came out during the last five-year period. There is no need because the good books all of you have read, and the bad ones are best left unmentioned.

We still write too little. The sorry display of fiction in the congress kiosks speaks for itself. I don't know how my brother-writers, delegates to this congress feel, but I try to give a wide berth to these kiosks, and if there's no avoiding them I hurry past before one of the delegates catches me by the sleeve and asks: "Why are there no books? Have the writers' pens run dry?"

As you can well understand, comrades, this kind of talk is not very pleasant for a writer to hear.

Apart from that, comrades, unfortunately we do not always write well. Needless to say we have accomplished something in the twenty years of Soviet literature's existence. In recognition of these successes the Government has awarded Orders to many of our writers.

The work of poets and prose writers in our fraternal national republics, hitherto little known to the Russian people, has now gained countrywide recognition. The fresh voices of these writers have blended with the voice of Russian literature, enriched it and made it a truly international literature.

Was any of us left unmoved by the epic songs of Jambul, so compelling in their simplicity? Were not we captivated by the enchanting sweetness of Georgian poems? Did we not suc-

cumb to the appeal of Suleiman Stalsky's fanciful, melodious lines? Even though they had lost a particle of their original charm in translation, the words of these writers found their way straight to our hearts....

Comrades, you know that the relations between Soviet writers and readers are entirely different from those in capitalist countries. The people whom we serve with our art never hesitate to express their opinion of us. We are criticised, upbraided when necessary, supported when we meet with failure, praised when we deserve praise, and every one of us is constantly aware of this guiding, gentle hand of the people. And so when the people tell the writer that he writes too little or that his writing is inferior in quality, what can the writer say in self-defence? He stands there long-faced, mumbling incoherently that he'll try to do better. He does sometimes, but not always. He'd like to write a better book but he simply can't do it for all his trying, he hasn't got what it takes, he's run out of talent.

There is another side to this problem, and we have to speak about it articulately and clearly—the question of paper. The percentage of paper allocated for fiction is infinitesimally small, it is so small that it hurts. Goslitizdat people say that if this year they publish just one book by every decorated author, of whom there are 172, there will be no paper left from their allotment, but after all it is not only the works of those who have already been decorated that must be published, but also of writers who will be decorated in the future.

And then there is that other category of writers who in the remote past were repaid for their genius with sentences of hard labour in Siberia and with banishment, they were pilloried, they were conscripted into the army as privates, they were crushed under by the obtuse might of the state machine and the church, or were simply killed with the hands of obligingly unscrupulous officers. The responsibility for this disgrace, this egregious shamelessness lies with the accursed regime which our people and our Party put an end to in 1917. Let that regime stand answer for it before history. We revere and love the classics with all our hearts, and it is only now, under Soviet power, that their books have been made available to the mass reader. These books are brought out in millions of copies, and still there are not enough. More paper must be allocated for publishing fiction. Paper should lie ready and waiting for good books, and not vice versa. That's how it ought to be organised. It's an intolerable state of affairs when having a million orders from readers for Pushkin and half a million for

Shevchenko we should publish a mere few dozen thousand copies this year.

At one time when for lack of new books Goslitizdat had to confine itself to the republication of old books, writers mockingly referred to it as the State Republishing House. I am afraid that if the present paper situation continues, Goslitizdat will be called the State Non-Publishing House. Still, writers are hopeful that the question of increasing the allocations of paper for fiction will be settled in their favour.

A few words, comrades, about the attitude of Soviet writers to the war which is being forced on us by the fascists. While hoping that in the future we shall get the lead of some branches of production, both in quantity and in quality, there is one branch which we writers have no intention whatsoever of outstripping—I mean the defence industry, firstly because there's no outstripping it anyway, and secondly because it's such a good, vitally essential branch that trying to outstrip it would be plainly indecent. Let it grow and prosper for the good of all of us and the end of our enemies.

Soviet writers do not belong to the sentimental breed of West European pacifists. If the enemy attacks our country, we Soviet writers shall lay down our pens and pick up another weapon in response to the call of the Party and the Government, and in the volley fired by the rifle regiment, which Comrade Voroshilov has spoken about, there'll be our lead too, as heavy and hot as our hatred for fascism, hitting and cutting down the enemy.

In the ranks of the Red Army, under its glorious red colours, we shall strike down the enemy as none had done before us, and I assure you, comrade delegates, that we are not going to abandon our map-cases—this Japanese custom is not becoming to us. On the contrary, we'll pick up the map-cases of others, because their contents will come in very useful to us afterwards in our literary business. After routing the enemy we shall write books describing how we went about it. These books will be of service to our people and will be a warning to the surviving aggressors, if any.

Comrades, like many of you I am present at a Party congress for the first time in my life. We can proudly state that we are the first shoots of the Soviet intelligentsia grown by the Party. After us will come millions upon millions of people for whom culture will be part of their lives.

1939

A MIGHTY ARTIST

Alexei Tolstoi was a writer with a big Russian soul and a huge diversified talent. His popularity with millions of readers, a love which he earned by long years of indefatigable work and his exacting treatment of the written word, is truly great and well-deserved.

A children's story, a historical novel, or a war story, everything in Tolstoi's strong and exacting hands acquired colours that sparkled with life, and also the amazing tangibility of a piece of sculpture, which only a true artist can achieve.

In his articles written in the days of the Great Patriotic War, Tolstoi spoke in the wrathful language of a tribune, and his voice was listened to with keen attention by soldiers at the front and those who, working in the rear, were helping the Red Army to win the great battle.

In those bad days when the Germans were pushing on to Moscow, Tolstoi as a true son of Russia who had infinite faith in his countrymen resurrected before the Soviet people the historical glory of Russia's past and reminded them of the behests of our great ancestors. The keynote of his articles was "We Shall Stand Firm!" Their very titles sounded like battle-calls: "Arise to Feats, to Glory!", "Stubbornness", "Dedication", "Faith in Victory", "Russia Roused to Anger", "The Invincible Citadel", "For Our Soviet Motherland", "Hate the Enemy".

In the article entitled "What Are We Defending?" written on June 27, 1941, Tolstoi expressed his love for his Soviet homeland in words that were simple and stirring in their sincerity. He said:

"My country, my native soil, my Motherland, there is no feeling more ardent, profound and sacred in life than my love for you...."

In another article he wrote these inspired lines about Soviet man, about "the mentality of the Soviet, and, in the first place, Russian man who, after taking a good draught of the drink called freedom, realised that besides the genocidal figures of German imperialism there was a higher justice under the life-giving sun ... there was the Soviet Union, the land of their fathers and forefathers, a promised land of happiness for their sons and grandsons."

These words of love and faith, spoken in very hard days, will not be obliterated from the grateful memory of the people.

Tolstoi faithfully continued the finest traditions of Russian literature, and was a zealous custodian of the purity of the Russian language. The young generation of Soviet writers, who always found a true friend in Tolstoi, are greatly indebted to him.

In the days of war Tolstoi, in addition to his publicist writing, worked hard on his masterpiece *Peter the First,* and his dramatic story *Ivan the Terrible.*

It gave all of us a feeling of heart-warming happiness to know that Tolstoi, that life-loving man who virtually scintillated with Russian talent, was living and working near us. We followed his work with love and hope, and eagerly leafed through the magazines to see if there was anything by him. All the harder and more bitter now is our feeling of loss.

In the very first days of war Tolstoi wrote: "To rout the armies of the Third Reich, wipe all the nazis together with their barbarously bloody schemes off the face of the earth, and give our Motherland peace, tranquility, eternal freedom, abundance and every opportunity for further development along the road to the highest human freedom—such is the supreme and honourable task which must be accomplished by us, Russians, and all the brother nations of our Union."

And one feels so terribly sad that he did not live to see our victory which is so very near.

1945

From A SPEECH AT THE FUNERAL OF ALEXEI TOLSTOI

...Our people have borne a terrible loss. Painful is the bitterness of bereavement. A big writer who had devoted his entire life and his powerful talent to his people has passed away.

Alexei Tolstoi was a writer with a generous Russian soul and a vivid, many-sided talent. He found simple, moving words to express his love for his Soviet homeland, for Soviet people, for everything that is dear to the heart of a Russian. He found passionate, searingly wrathful words to brand the fascist monsters who attempted to put the yoke of a slave on Russian man, on Soviet people.

The words of love and faith, spoken by the writer in those grim days which our country went through will never be erased from the grateful memory of the people....

1945

A GREAT FRIEND OF LITERATURE

With the death of Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin, who is deeply mourned by the entire Soviet people, our literature has lost its greatest friend and a competent, strict judge of the writer's endeavour.

Mikhail Ivanovich, who was brought up on Russian classic literature which he knew excellently and loved all his life with a pure, youthfully fresh love, always took the liveliest interest in the work of contemporary writers.

It was not more than two months ago that I had a conversation with him. Mikhail Ivanovich asked me what I was planning to write and how I was getting on with my novel *They Fought for Their Country*, and then said:

"I have long wanted to see you to talk with you about your book. Frankly, it worried me that writing a novel about the Great Patriotic War you might overlook the following, and to my mind, extremely important circumstance," and Mikhail Ivanovich proceeded to tell me what he considered ought to be reflected in my future book.

When I replied that I had it in mind and would try to write about it as best I could, Mikhail Ivanovich who was at the moment rolling himself a cigarette gave me a jolly glance from under his glinting spectacles and smiled a sweet old man's smile, which seemed to light up his whole face.

"Well, that's fine then! Very good. So I need not have worried," he said, and then continued in a more serious vein. "You see, what we readers want from you writers is not just books, we want good books giving a comprehensive picture of our life. This is why I'm meddling, so to speak, in your plans. And especially if the subject is a happening as formidable as the past war which our people came through with victory and honour, we want to read real books, the kind of books that will live for decades, if not more. You know how it goes with some authors: they don't give the plot time to shape properly in their minds, they lose no sleep over it, and before you know

it they have published their book, or worse still two books in a year, each with a life span of no more than a day. You read it today, and by tomorrow you will have forgotten the names of the main characters, the captain or perhaps lieutenant and the girl, and what the book was all about. The people in it were not real, they were grey, incorporeal shadows, so how could anyone be expected to remember them? And if to this you add the author's poor language and far from perfect form of the novel, then there's no point in remembering it at all. And as a result, the efforts of the printers and the publishing staff, the paper and the money have all been wasted. And so has the reader's precious time.

"The other day, I received a letter from a certain author and a copy of his plump book which has been brought out by a regional publishing house. In his letter, the author complained that the Union of Writers was unfair to him because it had not nominated his book for the Stalin Prize which, he stated, the book deserved. My eyes are bad, but still I read that voluminous work through. I read it and I did not answer the author." Mikhail Ivanovich made a hopeless gesture and smiled. "It was unkind of me, I know, but what could I do? The book did not deserve publication, let alone the Stalin Prize. So what could I reply to an author who had not a whit of talent and any amount of conceit? I don't suppose he would believe me either. And yet I did not hesitate to reply to an old intelligent writer who also sent me his new book not so long ago. I wrote back to say that the book was bad and cold. I told him straight: the book is bad!"

Mikhail Ivanovich fell silent and, rapping on the table with the tips of his fingers, smiled at some thought of his own.

He resumed: "About fifty years ago when I was in prison in Tiflis I got hold of a book by a well-known author. I was alone in the cell and this book was the only one I had. I read and re-read it countless times. I should have remembered it all my life, shouldn't I? But the minute I was released I forgot it completely, and since then I never felt like reading it again. It wasn't real literature, that's why.... When it's Tolstoi or Chekhov, you read the story once and remember it always, it remains projected on your memory. And when you start re-reading it you find you know it so well as if you'd read it the day before and not forty years ago.... To be sure, even the 'immortal' authors have books which, though perfect in form, are written with an indifferent hand, and they leave a sensa-

tion of chill in your soul, as if you'd placed your hand on a cold marble slab...."

Mikhail Ivanovich placed his small, dry hand on the table and illustrated his thought with a laconic movement which was so eloquent and impressive that all of us present seemed to feel the chilling breath of lifeless marble.

"What I call a good book is one where life pulsates under the binding, the way your blood does under your skin, and which you will remember for a long time, if not forever, and will want to re-read some day. Do you remember Chekhov's *Steppe*?" Mikhail Ivanovich asked, and with great animation began to talk about Chekhov, Tolstoi and Gorky.

Later, he asked me with keen interest about the life of collective farmers on the Don, which he knew from his tour of the Civil War fronts, and said reminiscently:

"You've a good lot of people there, like everywhere else in our country. With people like ours you can safely fight a war or take up construction. I liked your Don women especially, they're so hard-working, and they've got character. When they talked to me they didn't whine and nag that there was no cloth, no soap, and only sometimes when the shortage of something really got into their hair they'd curse a little, I remember ... in fact they cursed quite roundly...." Chuckling and wrinkling up his eyes with a peasant's knowing slyness, he said: "Oh well, I think it's better to get it off your chest by cursing than whine and nag, don't you agree?"

Speaking of the indestructible vitality of our people, Mikhail Ivanovich told me the following:

"Once, when I was in your parts, also in the twenties, I dropped in at a bee-garden in passing. The Civil War had just ended, the apiary had been sacked as both the Whites and our own people must have had a sweet tooth.... The old bee-keeper, a jovial old soul, came out to meet me. 'How's life?' I asked him, and he said: 'Fine, Mikhail Ivanovich!' What was so fine about it, I asked, wasn't he ruined by the war? And he said: 'It did ruin me but not quite. One out of my forty beehives has survived, and God be thanked for that. The bee family in that hive is mighty strong, and I can treat my dear guest to some honey right now! Come back in three years' time, and you won't know the bee-garden!'"

In parting, Mikhail Ivanovich asked me when I thought I'd finish the first part of my novel, and I gave him the approximate date.

"Then I'll live to read it," he said. "However, you must not

hurry, and don't take too much notice of what we readers want. Our business is to urge the writer on so his book will come out sooner, and your business is to produce a book that will be worth the attention of the people you're writing it for. After all, it's you and not the reader who'll be answerable for the book. Never forget this!"

Today, with the bitterness and pain of bereavement still fresh in my heart, that last conversation I had with Kalinin comes vividly back to mind. His encounter with the old beekeeper set me thinking: our country is like a huge beehive, seething with joyous, peaceful activity, busily restoring its war-ravaged economy.... Many years will pass, and our descendants, coming to the Red Square and bowing their heads before the Mausoleum of the greatest man of our epoch, will also pause with feelings of love and gratitude before the grave of Mikhail Ivanovich Kalinin who placed his entire life in the service of his country, and was Lenin's faithful comrade in his struggle for the happiness of people on earth.

1946

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN LITERATURE

(Speech at the gathering held in honour of this occasion)

There are two trends in Soviet literature. Some authors respond very quickly to current events, while others take a relatively long time over their books striving to produce works of a lasting value.

During the Great Patriotic War all of us responded very quickly to events. Life demanded it of us. I, too, wrote quickly then. Still, I reserve the right to work more slowly than readers would like me to do, trusting that slowness will be redeemed by quality.

The fact that my books run into several editions proves that important social processes can also be reflected in "slow" work.

Writing quickly one can produce bad books, and writing slowly—good ones.

The steadily growing influence and popularity of Soviet literature can be seen from the following example, for one: at the World Peace Congress of Cultural Workers held recently

in Wroclaw, Poland, a delegate from the Antilles told me that he used the last two pounds he had left to buy a translation of my book *And Quiet Flows the Don.* This episode shows that our Soviet literature has found its way into the remotest corners of the globe.

After all, it's only in the Soviet Union that we writers have all the necessary conditions for creative work. And therefore we simply must write well.

I have served the Soviet people all my life, and I shall always serve the people with my entire being.

September 1948

A RADIO ADDRESS

Soviet authors have an outstanding debt they owe to their readers. To my great regret and inner embarrassment, I too—the author of two unfinished novels—am one of the debtors, but not defaulters, not by any means.

We simply cannot keep pace with life with the artistic means we have at our disposal. Our only excuse and consolation is that in its advance towards communism our country has gathered such wonderful momentum and forges on with such giant strides that we cannot help falling behind with our tedious, finical work.

We are hurrying as best we can, but we can't afford to run out of breath until the finish.

And so this is what happens: while the writer is painstakingly describing the bare tree branches in March and the swelling burgeons ripe for spring, the tree will have already thrown out its first sticky little leaves. Astonished by this picture and shocked by his own slowness, the writer hastily begins to describe the leaves, and before he has finished the tree will have already shed its lovely spring blossoms and will be bearing fruit....

This, of course, is what happens to those of us who write big novels and not short stories which naturally take less effort and incomparably less time to do.

As for myself, at the present time I'm working simultaneously on the last part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* and the first part of *They Fought for their Country.* With your permission, I shall not make any promises. I know from my own bitter experience that you cannot set yourself a deadline, that is, if

your sense of responsibility for how and what you are writing does not desert you.

Working on a novel may be likened to building. But whereas in construction the jobs and duties of every builder are strictly defined, in the case of a writer he has only himself to rely upon. He is the purveyor of building materials, he is the architect, the mason, and the engineer too. And unfortunately, it often happens that in the process of building the plans of the architect have to be changed for some reason, and what the mason has already done must be pulled down. So how can anyone set any deadlines in a project like this?

I may be wrong, but when I think of the writer's far from easy toil I think: let the construction take longer than it should so long as the "building" you are creating with your brain and your hand is reliable, solid and serviceable for a long time.

And if our intelligent reader does not forget your book the very next day (such things happen too), if at some later time he feels like re-reading the book and thinking some more about it, if he says about the author: "Dammit, this fellow has done a good job, it's a good book!"—this will give the writer the highest moral satisfaction and reward, because for him the reader is the supreme judge.

When our readers, near or far, ponder the destinies of Soviet literature and its development, they must not forget that Soviet writers have but one aim: to serve the interests of our people and our great Party.

1952

I WISH YOU HAPPINESS, UKRAINIAN PEOPLE!

I am enchanted with the majestic stateliness of ancient Kiev, with its monuments, parks, gardens, its handsome buildings and streets. The Kreshchatik—the city's main thoroughfare with its uninterrupted stream of cars and people—is amazingly beautiful. Two Kievs seem to rise before the newcomer's enraptured gaze—ancient Kiev, the cradle of Slav peoples, and modern Kiev, the new, Soviet city which is expanding miraculously before your very eyes.

How can you help falling in love with this city whose magic stirs you to the bottom of your heart!

What untold beauty there is in the slopes running down to the Dnieper, in the embankment, and in those darkling outlines of the forest on the other side of the river, far, far away on the horizon! The mighty Dnieper is as dear to my heart as my own quiet Don.

I now feel an even deeper affection for the gifted and hard-working Ukrainian people who, in the friendly family of Soviet brother nations, are fashioning their destiny and working in the name of life, peace, and happiness on earth.

Ukrainians are kind, warm-hearted people with a spark of inborn humour, and at the same time they are strong and courageous. My attachment to the Ukraine is strengthened by the fact that my mother was a Ukrainian, a peasant woman from Chernigov Region.

Ukrainian literature—original and versatile in character—has made considerable strides in its development and has earned well-deserved repute not only in our country, but also far beyond its bounds. This has been eloquently demonstrated at the Third Congress of Ukrainian Writers which I attended as a guest.

I have been very pleasantly impressed by those Ukrainian writers whom I met in Kiev. Among the relatively young ones especially there are many promising, gifted authors with an individuality of their own. There are many authors I could name: Oles Gonchar who is a real novelist, Vadim Sobko, the gifted playwright Vasily Minko, the very young poet Dmitry Pavlichko, and the powerful humorist Ostap Vishnya.

As for Ukrainian literary criticism, I have to state with regret that it falls rather short. Ukrainian critics are subject to the same faults as are their Russian colleagues. The reason, as I see it, is that many of the critics tend to develop the attitude of superficial reviewers, and go no further than that.

Promising critics should be competently selected and trained, and all the necessary conditions created for their work. Everyone knows, for instance, that every Soviet building organisation has at its disposal all the essential facilities for different jobs. So why not provide Soviet literary critics with conditions in which they can do really useful, serious work? I think it's high time this long-outstanding problem has been tackled. In my opinion, the fees paid to the playwrights might be reduced and a solid fund for the critics built up with the money thus saved.

Not all is well with the translations of Ukrainian literature into Russian and other languages of the peoples of the USSR.

The melodiousness of Ukrainian speech is lost in the translations with which we are presented.

Like all of you I am convinced that Ukrainian writers will yet present our country and all progressive mankind with many splendid new novels.

To my great regret I have been unable to make a tour of other Ukrainian towns and villages during this visit, and only saw Kiev and its environs. But Kiev, of course, is the hub of the Ukraine, and it reflects as in a mirror the flourishing life and culture of the Ukrainian people and the glorious road it has traversed in the thirty-seven years since the victory of the October Revolution.

My profound respects to you, Ukraine. I wish you happiness, Ukrainian people.

1954

SPEECH AT THE SECOND ALL-UNION CONGRESS OF SOVIET WRITERS

A very old saying, born in the land of rushing mountain streams, says: "Only the shallow rivers are noisy."

The tumult and the excitement of the regional and district writers' meetings, where debates were sharp and speeches challenging, are over. The meetings at the republican level were more restrained, and now this all-Union congress of ours which may be likened to a great river that has absorbed numerous large and small tributaries is proceeding with truly majestic, and to my view, sinister calm.

The faces of the speakers are dispassionate, the reports are strictly formal, the speeches of most of our writers have been carefully streamlined, and even the authoresses and poetesses, generally more quick-tempered than the men in polemics, are locked in silence except for a few rare exceptions. Have our dear and aggressive ladies spent all their verbal energy at the preliminary meetings and are now feeling creatively exhausted, or are they conserving their strength for a new outburst towards the end of the congress? There's no understanding women, even though they are writers. There's no telling what they might do next. At least, I can never tell.

The congress is in its seventh day, but the atmosphere remains unchanged. Only Valentin Ovechkin's speech evoked a

slight but stillborn animation. Can it be that all the problems which had worried us for twenty years have been settled, and all we must do now is sum up our achievements and mistakes, and having taken note of these mistakes and unanimously adopted the new rules, take up the pen again with an easy mind? Hardly.

I hate to disrupt the classic calm prevailing at the congress which was just slightly marred by two or three speakers, but still I shall, with your permission, say what I think of our literature and dwell, if only briefly, on what must worry all of us.

A great deal has been said here about our general achievements. There is no gainsaying that our multinational Soviet literature has achieved truly great results in the past twenty years, and that many gifted writers have entered the literary scene. But for all that a drab stream of colourless, mediocre literature continues to gush forth from the pages of the literary magazines and flood the market.

It is time we joined efforts to bar the way to this murky stream by building a solid dam, otherwise we are in danger of losing our readers' respect which took no little effort and time for our serious writers to win.

This, naturally, does not apply by any manner of means to those young writers who have just entered literature and are doing better with every book, but only to the well-known authors who, having lost respect for their work and for their readers, are visibly wilting and going downhill turning from masters into hacks.

Let us take a retrospective view of these last years, if by last years we mean the period that has elapsed since the war. In wartime, naturally, most of the writers could not even give thought to big novels whose plots would be conceived in long and difficult reflection, books born in travail, with the language perfectly polished, and the style impeccable. In wartime the writer's pen was a weapon, and there was no time to worry about the perfection of form. Authors had but one task: to give their pen such a true aim that it would hit straight at the enemy, give support to our soldiers, fire and keep aflame in the hearts of the Soviet people a scorching hatred for the enemy and a passionate love of their motherland. The writers coped with this task well, as everyone knows. But after the war a great many of our writers carried on with the running start they had taken, and continued writing carelessly, in haste, with the resultant sharp reduction in the artistic standard of a large number of books. What the reader was willing to for-

give us in wartime, would not pass muster after the war. And such truly talented postwar literature as the books of Fadeyev, Fedin, Auezov, Pavlenko, Gladkov, Leonov, Paustovsky, Upits, Tvardovsky, Yakub Kolas, Gonchar, Nekrasov and some others brought into even sharper relief the wretched inferiority of those efforts which can be deservedly called literary miscarriages.

Needless to say, the habit of haste cultivated in wartime was not the only or the main reason for the general drop in the standard of our books.

One of the main reasons, to my mind, was the astonishing and quite unreasonable drop in standards among the writers, and the drop in criteria among the critics. Writers drifted past their comrades' definitely bad, let alone mediocre novels with amazing indifference and completely blank expressions. They did not speak up in indignation against the publication of garbage which cultivates low tastes in our less exacting readers, corrupts our young people, and gives literature a bad name with the qualified readers who are exacting and uncompromising in their evaluations.

Well, and as for some of the critics, matters were even worse. If a rotten book was published by an esteemed author, and a prize winner to boot, a great many of the critics put on blank expressions, seeing this indecency, and more often than not they simply turned away in great embarrassment. The reading public sometimes witnessed a truly staggering, fantastic transformation: these "vehement Vissarions"* suddenly turned into blushing damsels. Some silently burnt with shame, while others, forgetting about their virtue and deciding to build up a small "capital", gushed over the celebrity and lavished a wealth of little-deserved and extravagant compliment on him. And indeed, has our press ever published a single critical article in which a literary master received what was due to him for an inferior book in full measure, without any allowances or reservations? Never. And it's a pity. We cannot and must not have any persons enjoying the right of immunity.

Some might object and say that such articles *were* written but not published for reasons beyond the control of the critics. In the years of the Civil War the workers and peasants used to say: "Soviet power is in our hands." Today, we have every

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* The reference is to the famous Russian critic Vissarion Belinsky (1811-1848) known for his uncompromising attitudes.—*Tr.*

right to say: "Soviet literature is in our hands." And the fewer timid souls like Ryurikov there are in the newspapers and magazines, the more uncompromising, bold and badly needed critical articles will be published.

Literaturnaya Gazeta is called upon to shape the readers' public opinion. This newspaper is a key to our literature, a means of gaining an unprejudiced acquaintance with it. But how can it possibly be unprejudiced when it is headed by a person who, greatly indebted to Comrade Simonov for this promotion in the field of literary criticism, looks up to his patron as if he were the Sun, and actually shields his eyes from the dazzling light?

When we, pondering on the future, speak of the type of political leader our Union ought to have, most of us gratefully and sorrowfully remember Comrade Polikarpov: gratefully because he did a lot for the wholesome development of our literature if only by virtue of his non-affiliation with any groupings, and sorrowfully because with our silent connivance he was finally "eaten up alive" by those literary lads and lassies who, to our great misfortune, happily combine two skills—that of the writer, and that of the plotter. When they rest from the toils of writing, they plunge into scheming and, alas, they often succeed far better in their second skill than they do in their first.

What *Literaturnaya Gazeta* needs is an editor who belongs to no groups or groupings, a man who is dedicated to Soviet literature, and not its high priests, be they Simonov, Fadeyev, Ehrenburg or Sholokhov. The editor of our newspaper has to be courageous, staunch, and of course absolutely honest in matters of literature. It is not enough to dream of such an editor, comrades. We must demand an editor like that. We have the legal and inalienable right to demand it.

To come back to the subject of critics, it may be said that they spring back to life when a weak story by a middling writer, a little-known, or a budding author appears in print. Now when this happens, our critics pull on their men's trousers again—forgive the metaphor—and their lyric sopranos immediately change to authoritative baritons and basses. Now they can let go and swing out with all their might! Now even Ryurikov will gladly print their articles without fear of being shouted down from Vorovsky Street,* and now the critic can

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* Vorovsky Street is where the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers has its headquarters.—*Tr.*

really let himself go and make a brilliant show of condescending witticism and virulent sarcasm.

Instead of oil and treacle with which the celebrated have just been annointed, the critics now ladle out a different, and often far from fragrant fluid from another vessel and generously pour it onto the heads of the poor devils who have not qualified for prize winners and are therefore no celebrities. Sometimes the poor chap will still be seeing stars from the first blow, when the next critic has already crept up to club him from behind again.

By the way, many people have spoken here of our "literary cartridge clip"—our five or ten leading writers. Is it not time, comrades, to check on our ammunition like the old soldiers we are? Is there anyone who doesn't know that bullets become oxidised and grow rusty if they are kept too long in the cartridge clip, especially in rainy or slushy weather, known as the thaw? Well then, is it not time we removed the old, stale bullets and filled the cartridge clip with new and fresher ones instead? Far be it from me to suggest throwing out the old bullets, they will still come in useful, but they need to be gone over with an alkaline solution or, if this does not help, with sandpaper. Don't worry, their skin won't come off. These old bullets should by no means be discarded because after all not every one of them will misfire. That, too, must be appreciated.

It's a poor soldier who has just one cartridge clip. He'll never win a battle with such meagre ammunition. Like all of you, I also want us to have plenty of bullets in our cartridge clips and more in the boxes where they will be handy if the need arises. Their safety will be the business of our readers. They are no misers, but at the same time they do not approve of waste.

And here is another thing. The word "leading" when applied to someone who really leads others is quite all right, but it also happens that a once leading writer no longer leads anyone and is marking time. And he marks time not for just a month, or a year, but for a good ten years or even more—say, like me, or someone resembling me.

You will readily understand, comrades, that it's not very pleasant saying such things about oneself, but one has to: self-criticism, you know. Well then, a writer such as this will stop like a ram in front of a new gate, and stand there. So how can he be called a leading writer when he's a standstill writer?

Everyone knows how it's done in Party work—a man commanding respect, a leading figure, will be appointed secretary of a regional Party committee. He works more or less passably the first year, and less passably the second year, and then he is very politely told to go and learn the job.

As the saying goes, a holy place will soon be fitted. And so the literary "cartridge clip" will be filled. It's not the writers themselves who will fill it simply because they wish to do so—it will take a bit more than wishing here—it's the people who want to struggle for their culture, for their happiness, for communism, who will put them in with the hand of the true master.

One more reason why the standard of our books has dropped is the system of awarding prizes for literature, a system which, regrettably, has persisted to this day. Comrade Ovechkin has dwelt on this question in detail, and I only have to add a few words. Honestly, dividing works of literature into classes, first, second and third, makes me think of a price list.

Well, and what about the works that did not qualify for this price list? What must we call all those books that failed to win any prize? Are they scrap, or what? This is absurd, authors will feel bitterly wronged, and so this system is no good at all, especially if one bears in mind that many good books—talented, intelligent books—have never fetched a prize, yet sometimes they are in greater demand than prize-winning ones.

A thing like this may happen. Say, an author has written a fair-to-middling book. He has no illusions about his own abilities, and does not expect it to be a spectacular success. His next will be better, he hopes. And all of a sudden he receives a prize for it. A second prize, it is true. Do you expect him to say to the prize-givers in all honesty: "What are you doing, brothers? Don't give me the prize, my book doesn't deserve it." Oh no, only a simpleton would do that. So, the writer accepts the prize, and before long he begins to think that he himself and the people who awarded the prizes had underestimated the worth of his book and he might well have been given the first and not the second prize for it.

That's how we mislead both the writers and the readers.

I do not make so bold as to propose to the congress anything definite on this matter. But one thing is clear—we must approach the government with a request to reconsider the system of prizes for literature and art, because things cannot go on the way they are now.

Under this system, if it continues, we ourselves will soon be unable to tell gold from copper, and the completely disoriented reader will be on his guard against books by prize-winners.

A high award cannot be given casually and lightly, for if it is it will cease to be a high award.

Think what will happen to some of our talents in ten or fifteen years from now if the existing system of prizes continues! One lady we all love for her glorious talent (I mean Alla Konstantinovna Tarasova) will not be able to walk unsupported, so laden she will be with the medals she has won and will yet win. To say nothing of Comrade Simonov. We can safely expect him to produce a play, a poem, and a novel a year, not counting such trifles as poetry, short stories, and the like. Converted into medals, this means three a year. As it is, Simonov walks about these halls with the prideful air of a crown prince of literature, and in fifteen years' time, having overeaten himself on fame, he will no longer walk, even if supported on either side, but will be pushed about in a wheel-chair.

It's terrible, really!

Already now many of our prize-winners inspire trepidation, if not awe. And what will happen if this goes on?

The other day I saw a man in civilian clothes and his whole chest was covered with gold and medals. Good heavens above, has Ivan Poddubny risen from the dead, I thought? No, he did not have the build of a wrestler, and it turned out that the man was either a film director or a cameraman. It's a hell of a muddle, honestly. No, comrade writers, let's shine with our books more than with our medals.

A medal is an acquired thing, and a book is your own brain-child.

It is only my deep concern for literature that compels me to say unpleasant things to my fellow writers sometimes.

With his innate modesty and his fidelity to our unwritten law, Comrade Simonov has said nothing about himself in his report. Allow me to fill in the blank.

This is neither the time nor the place for a detailed analysis of his books. I should like to speak of his work as a whole.

Konstantin Simonov is by no means a new man in literature, he is a sufficiently old and experienced soldier. And he has written a lot in all the genres common to literature. But as I re-read his books I can't rid myself of the suspicion that he was not striving for top marks when he wrote them. And yet he is indisputably a gifted writer, and his reluctance (not inability,

which is out of the question) to give the whole of himself to his book, gives food for troubled thought. What can young writers learn from Simonov? Perhaps only speed, and an aptitude for diplomatic manoeuvring which is not all that essential to a writer. These abilities, I'll be quite frank, are hardly enough for a big writer. His last book worries me especially: on the surface of it everything is all right, everything is in its right place, but when you have finished the book you have the feeling that you, a hungry man, had been invited to a banquet and were treated to some bread soaked in water, and not enough of it to appease your hunger. You're disappointed, and hungry, and angry at your miser of a host.

Comrade Simonov has been writing for many years, and it's time he took a retrospective view of his career and stopped to think that the day will come when a little boy will point at him and say: "Why, the king is naked!" We won't want to see your nakedness, Konstantin Mikhailovich, so take our friendly advice in the spirit in which it is offered: hurry, and put on more clothes, preferably the kind that will never wear out.

I simply must mention Ehrenburg, too, seeing that we're old friends. Don't worry, I'm not going to start an argument again on questions of writing, heaven forbid! It's all very well arguing with someone who puts up a furious defence, but Ehrenburg takes offence at the slightest hint of criticism and says that it completely puts him off writing. When your opponent brings up his old age the moment you touch him and makes you pity him, what kind of an argument is it? No, we don't hit a person when he's down, it's not our way. I don't want to put Ehrenburg off writing.... He's doing a big and very useful job by actively participating in our common struggle for peace. But we criticise him as a writer, not as a peace fighter, and that's our right. For instance, he took offence at Simonov for his article about *The Thaw*. He ought not to have taken that attitude, because if Simonov had not been so prompt with his article, another critic would have written differently about *The Thaw*. In actual fact Simonov had saved Ehrenburg from very sharp criticism. And still Ehrenburg feels wronged. I suppose this can only be explained by that "oversensitiveness" with which Ehrenburg endowed all the writers the other day at this congress.

But we need not worry too much about the exchange of high words between Ehrenburg and Simonov. They'll make up.

There is just one point I'd like to raise with Comrade Ehrenburg. In his speech he said: "If I am still able to write another

book, I shall endeavour to make it a step forward from my last book"—meaning *The Thaw.* Compared with *The Storm* and *The Decuman Wave,* it is unquestionably a step back. Now Ehrenburg promises to make a step forward. I don't know how these dance steps are called in other languages, but in Russian they are called "shuffling". So, come to think of it, it's not much you have promised us, Ilya Grigoryevich.

Our malicious enemies abroad allege that we, Soviet writers, write at the bidding of the Party. Actually, the fact of the matter is rather different, since each one of us writes at the bidding of his own heart—and our hearts belong to the Party and the people, whom we serve with our art.

We are sometimes unnecessarily rude to each other, we are sometimes intolerant in our opinions of books, but we are certainly not motivated by spitefulness, vanity or greed, and only by our wish to make our literature an even better helper of the Party in the business of educating the masses in the spirit of communism, to make it even worthier of our great people and of our country's great literary past whose rightful heirs we are.

I believe with all my heart that many of us will produce new, outstanding works before we meet for our third congress.

From the bottom of my heart I wish every one of you, comrade writers, new creative successsses and the happiness of knowing that a good job has been well done—that feeling of lighthearted joy familiar to every workingman.

1954

PASSIONATE AND TRUTHFUL

I sincerely wish the readers of *Izvestia* and all Soviet people happiness, joy and success in the coming year.

Our country is gathering strength for a new and mightier spurt, for a new advance, and new accomplishments. To think how passionately, stirringly and truthfully we must therefore write about the deeds of Soviet people, about the nobility and excellence of Soviet man, and about his devotion to his Motherland! We, Soviet writers, serve the Soviet people with whom we are bound by ties of blood. With filial respect we listen to the voice of the Party, which is the conscience of the people, and we feel honour-bound to take a stricter, an even more exacting view of our work.

I wish my brother writers success in their hard but honourable work. In the New Year let us try with all our might to charge each word we write with inspiration so that it would help people to cope with their daily labours and cares!

1954

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

Dear friends, readers of *Sovietsky Soyuz*!

Last year Soviet literature produced quite a number of books which deservedly earned recognition among the readers in our country and evoked the liveliest response from our friends abroad. But we have to do immeasurably more in the future.

As always, on New Year, all our thoughts and hopes are turned to the future.

Our mission and purpose in life is to secure peace and produce literary works with a lofty ideological message and high artistic merits that would be worthy of our great epoch and the great Soviet people.

I wish you a happy New Year, and every success in your creative endeavour (every kind of work is always creative), as well as happiness in your personal life.

1955

A LETTER TO THE EDITORS OF *INOSTRANNAYA LITERATURA*

Dear comrade editor,

I have just read the first issue of your magazine, and I think that the tasks it has set itself are worthwhile ones. The magazine is called upon to help Soviet people gain a better knowledge and appreciation of the literatures of other nations.

In this connection I should like to raise certain points which seem essential to me.

I have in mind our international cultural relations and a wide exchange of experience between Soviet and foreign writers.

Every nation, big or small, has its own cultural values. Man's spiritual wealth is comprised of these values.

Our nation has made its sizeable contribution to the treasure-store of world culture. Our nation was generous and unselfish in its desire to make the values of its national culture the possession of mankind as a whole.

At the same time we have always had great regard for the cultural achievements of other nations. This is convincingly evidenced by numerous and frequent trips which our cultural workers make to countries abroad, and the welcome we always give our foreign guests.

I do not want to quote facts and figures, as they are generally known. I shall only permit myself to recall to the minds of the readers that we received close on ten thousand foreign guests in the course of last year, 1954, alone.

Tangible evidence of our great regard for the culture of other nations will be found in the fact that books by foreign authors, and not just the classics either, are published in the USSR.

The Soviet people wanted to develop our foreign relations on the widest possible scale. It was this desire that prompted the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to adopt at its second session on February 9th the well-known declaration which stressed the need to strengthen international contacts as an important factor conducive to the normalisation of the international situation.

I was one of the deputies and I gladly voted for the declaration.

Now that the Geneva conference has become a historical fact, there is no need to say just what it was that prevented the Soviet people from considerably enlarging the cultural exchange with countries abroad.

Nor is there any need to reiterate that the "cold war" is incompatible with well-meaning cultural co-operation.

There was a time when our cultural relations with a country like the USA began to strengthen and develop. The military co-operation of the American and Soviet peoples created all the necessary prerequisites for an expansion of our friendly contacts after the war.

Alas, this is not what happened.

Our attempts to develop cultural relations with the USA were practically, if not utterly, unsuccessful.

True, there were no few Americans among the thousands of foreigners coming as tourists or guests to the Soviet Union.

However, until a short time ago, there was no reciprocal hospitality offered us.

But I repeat that it is the future and not the past I want to talk about today.

I firmly believe that if the "spirit of Geneva" finds its way into all spheres of international affairs, there will be good prospects for the development of cultural relations.

The writers of the world should have their own round table. We may hold different views, but we shall be united by our desire to be useful to people.

Speaking of us, Soviet writers, we would sincerely like our relations with all the writers in the world to be as close and vigorous as our increasingly strengthening contacts with our fellow writers in many countries of the West and the East.

I should be very glad to know what my American, English, West German and Japanese colleagues think about this.

I am mentioning these writers in the first place because it is with their countries that our postwar cultural relations left much to be desired.

Such is the first point I wanted to raise in my letter.

For the second point, I shall permit myself to make certain suggestions relating to the future activity of your newly-founded magazine.

As I understand it, your magazine is called upon to publish all that bears the stamp of true talent, all that helps people to live a life worthy of man.

I should be glad, and I am sure many feel as I do, if your magazine became a platform where people who have the interests of modern literature at heart could communicate with one another. We would be grateful if the magazine arranged an exchange of letters between Soviet readers (and writers, too) and the authors of the novels and stories published by you.

It is possible that after reading these works and learning from them about the inner world, the struggles and the hopes of different nations, Soviet readers will conceive thoughts of interest to the foreign writers. No writer in the world remains indifferent to the opinion of his readers. I remember how eagerly I read everything that was said by foreign readers, Americans too, about *And Quiet Flows the Don.* The opinions were contradictory, I accepted far from everything in them, but for all that they were very instructive.

I believe that correspondence such as I have suggested would further our mutual cultural enrichment and understanding.

I am writing this letter feeling that the time has come when, provided there is goodwill and mutual respect, the development of cultural relations might be launched on a broader scale—if the effort is mutual, of course.

I am, naturally, raising all these points in a very general way, because I hold that the main thing is agreement in principle, and the rest will take care of itself.

I should be glad to know my foreign colleagues' opinion on this matter.

We shall find a common language, I am firmly convinced of this.

1955

NEW YEAR WISHES

On the eve of the New Year one does not feel like repeating all the old truths about the purpose and aims of our art. This would be pretty stale food for a New Year party! I presume that all of us, each in his own sphere of art, are sufficiently literate people, and so we must know what our country expects from us and what we have to do. I simply want to wish our mighty Soviet art and literature new and wonderful achievements in the coming year. To the young artists and writers I wish quicker creative maturity, and to the mature ones—youthful enthusiasm and persistence in their striving for perfection.

1956

From A SPEECH ADDRESSED TO THE 20TH PARTY CONGRESS

Comrade delegates!

As you have already been informed by our secretary Comrade Surkov, Soviet literature has no specified targets for the Sixth Five-Year Plan. To this I can only add that even if we did have a plan it would not be fulfilled anyway, because of the nature of our work and also because, truth to tell, we writers are the most unorganised people in our country.

The Union of Soviet Writers has 3,247 members and 526 candidate members, or a total of 3,773 people armed with pens and possessing a larger or lesser measure of literary skill. As you can see, it's quite a force, but don't let this figure either overawe or gladden you. It only sounds impressive, while in actual fact this list of writers largely consists of "dead souls".

Pity there are no Chichikovs* in our day, otherwise Surkov for all his lack of business acumen would have made a fortune for the Union of Soviet Writers with just one major operation.

Speaking directly with my own Party I have to say the truth, however bitter, about our literature. My Party duty compels me to do so, and so do my writer's conscience and honour.

Comrade Surkov has spoken somewhat inarticulately about the achievements of the last few years and, to illustrate the situation, mentioned the increasing number of books published by Sovietsky Pisatel in 1953, 1954 and 1955. In plain words this is called eyewash.

Surely progress in literature is not gauged by the number of books brought out in a year. He ought to have said that we could count the good, wise books published in the last twenty years on our fingers, and mediocre ones without number. A thousand writers' pens produced some ten good books in twenty years. Not a very good show, don't you think? That's what Comrade Surkov ought to have said, although you all know it yourselves.

It would be strange if today, when Soviet people are building the biggest hydroelectric power stations in the world, our propagandists were to keep on telling everyone that, whatever anyone said, we did build the Dnieproges in 1932.

And that is exactly what we, the writers, have done: built ourselves a literary "Dnieproges" dam from books written twenty or thirty years ago, and the moment someone presses us we quickly hide behind that dam and speak up from there, not without aplomb: "What do you mean there are no books? What do you mean we don't write? What about *The Life of Klim Samgin*? And the novels of Sergeyev-Tsensky? And Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*? And Gladkov's *Cement*? And Fadeyev's *Rout*? And the novels of Leonov and Fedin? And Furmanov's *Chapayev*? And Panferov's *Bruski*?" And we blurt out the titles of another dozen books which readers liked and

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* Chichikov—the main character in Gogol's famous story *Dead Souls*.—*Ed.*

time had spared. How much longer are we going to sit out behind the blessed cover of this all-redeeming dam?

In the time that has elapsed since the thirties, new and wonderful masters of prose, poetry and drama poured into the ranks of our multinational Soviet literature. It goes without saying that in the whole course of its existence our literature did produce quite a number of valuable books and rightfully became the leading literature in the world. But in all honesty we must say that the reason why it became the leading literature is not because it had attained some hitherto unattainable heights of artistic perfection, but because all of us, to the best of our talent, are disseminating the all-conquering ideas of communism—mankind's greatest hope. Herein lies the secret of our success. If a writer, any writer, in our day tried to write a book from positions of anti-communism, his name would be immediately buried in contemptuous oblivion and copies of his unread book would grow mildewed on the shelves. And so you see, credit is due not so much to those who wrote the books as to our own Communist Party which inspired this effort. And we, writers, sincerely and with all our hearts, rejoice in this and are prepared, till our last breath, to serve the cause of Lenin's Party with our writing and faithfully uphold its noble interests both in life and in literature.

If our prose has been at a distressing standstill these last few years, our dramaturgy is no better off. Very, very few good plays have been written, and even the heroic efforts of Korneichuk and a few other playwrights cannot save our theatres from an acute repertory hunger. Korneichuk is a tough fellow, but then any other Ukrainian, even Taras Bulba himself, would have doubled up if he were made to work for twenty men.

What's wrong? Why does our literature lag behind?

Everyone knows that Lev Tolstoi knew the soul of the Russian peasant as none of us modern writers do; Gorky has travelled all over Russia on foot; Leskov by post chaise; and Chekhov, though he was already gravely ill, found the strength to make a trip to Sakhalin, prompted by his enormous love for his fellowmen and his professional writer's curiosity. Yet many of today's writers, many of the Muscovites particularly, live in a sort of magic triangle: Moscow—dacha—seaside resort, and the other way about: seaside resort—dacha—Moscow. Aren't they ashamed to waste their life and their talent in this way?

About 1,200 writers live in Moscow. I suppose it's natural:

Moscow is the capital, the country's biggest cultural and industrial centre. What is unnatural is that even living in the capital writers manage to isolate themselves from life. In the simplicity of my soul I imagined that my fellow writers who lived in Moscow associated with the workers of major industrial enterprises, took a lively interest in the production of one or another factory, and also in the needs and plans of the workers. Nothing of the kind. They live in the forest and don't see the trees.

Which of the writers have made friends with and were taken into the bosom of the family of an industrial worker, an engineer, an innovator in production, or a Party worker at some factory? An odd few. Otherwise the Zhurbins would have been discovered in Moscow long before Kochetov discovered them in Leningrad. My brother writers keep each to himself, they live like outsiders, like poor old solitaries. It made me sad to discover that none of the big Moscow plants had a writer-friend—neither the workers of the Serp i Molot, the Stalin Automobile Works, the Dynamo or the Krasny Proletary plants. I hope I'm wrong, but I am afraid that this also goes for the Frezer, the Trekhgornaya Manufaktura, the Kalibr, the Ballbearing Works, and other plants.

True, writers occasionally appear at the big plants as guests, or rather guest performers, and to our great shame they sometimes unblushingly accept payment from the workers' cash box for their public appearance. Since when has public activity become a paid job? Some writers even take money for appearing at the military academies. It's high time we put an end to this disgrace. It's time the literary businessmen had it brought home to them that there is some difference between a writer and a variety singer who earns his daily bread with his voice. This is intolerable in principle, and it is even more intolerable when the hand of a communist writer reaches out for remuneration from a factory or any other enterprise.

Why then do these 1,200 writers live in Moscow? Why do they hold on to Moscow so fast that even tractors could not pull them away? I find it difficult to answer these questions. Perhaps you yourselves will try to find the answer to the riddle? I know one thing, that such a distribution of creative forces is both wrong and unjustified. Alas, it is the same in Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Alma-Ata, and all the big cities. Everywhere the writers live in towns, and you'll hardly find one who has his home in a workers' settlement or a village.

You are expecting new books, comrades, and I want to ask you: from whom? From writers who don't properly know any collective farmers or workers? From writers who are sitting in their holes or are curled up in their shells? But it has been known for a long, long time that those who seek nothing, find nothing. No worthwhile, good books will come out in the near future unless the situation in literature is radically changed, and it is only the Party that can change it. However, I'll come back to this later.

I should like to say a few words in response to Comrade Gafurov's speech, or rather that part of it where he touches upon literature. Comrade Gafurov is quite right to say that literature is lagging behind. But Comrade Gafurov is not right when he ascribes it to a drop in creative activity. That is not the reason.

Literature must necessarily lag a little behind life, because serious literature is not a newsreel and, as Lev Tolstoi used to say, the creation of large canvases takes gruelling toil and also a lot of time.

Does Comrade Gafurov know that Alexei Tolstoi worked on his novel *The Ordeal* for twenty-two years, and for fifteen on his *Peter the First* which he did not live to finish?

A great number of such examples might be cited, and all of them, I am sure, are known to Comrade Gafurov. I am certain, however, that he does not know this salty Ukrainian saying: "A child made in haste is born blind." The wisdom of this saying can be confirmed by numerous examples when hastily made books, born blind or half-blind, never saw any readers.

Our Soviet readers will forgive us our slowness but never our bad, drab books.

Like you, Comrade Gafurov, I also prefer to travel by plane and not by an ox-driven cart, in ordinary life, that is. But in literature, I'd rather travel in a cart with a heavy load much needed by the people than fly in a plane with a light overnight bag for luggage containing various nail files, an assortment of little brushes, and other articles of dandified toiletry. While we are on the subject, I must say that even when speaking on literary themes it is sometimes better to plod on with an unhurried step than flit about like a carefree butterfly.

Dear Comrade Gafurov, please don't take me wrong and forgive me my excessive polemic zeal. But, after all, I'm also a southerner like you, and I am used to arguing hotly and not

trail along behind my opponent. You have spoken of creative fire. Well, you know, it's the sort of thing that can't be measured with a thermometer, but when it comes to debate you and I run the same temperature for all that you are a Tajik and I am a Russian. You are a reader, and I am a writer, and we have given a visual demonstration of how passionately you love me and how ardently I reciprocate your feelings. And you would still say that writers are lacking in reciprocal affection for their readers! Lacking indeed, when it would take a bulldozer to pull us apart! Well then, I hope we're quits now, Comrade Gafurov? That's fine, then.

No books have come out lately, I mean books that could captivate the hearts and minds of the broad reading masses. Who is to blame? The writers themselves in the first place, of course, but the blame is also shared by Party organisations concerned with questions of culture, and the readers too. Readers cannot stand and watch from the sidelines, they are also responsible to a certain extent for the present state of literature because literature, as everyone knows, is not just the private business of the writers themselves, but the concern of the entire people and is, above all else, a Party concern.

The Party has more than once put the Union of Writers straight when ideological mistakes were made at different stages of the literary struggle, and we have always felt its strong, guiding hand, for which we must sincerely thank it.

But what really beats me is how did all of us overlook the fact that a considerable number of writers have long been living in isolation from life and not contributing anything to literature! Remember what happened when some of our collective farm chairmen and directors of Machine and Tractor Stations—from among the thirty thousand who were sent to the countryside by the Party—tried to go on living in their old homes in towns where they used to work before, only appearing at the collective farm or the Machine and Tractor Station on and off. A whole campaign was launched on a countrywide scale! The *Pravda* wrote about it again and again, and the entire press was alerted. Public opinion harshly condemned these people for wanting to live away from the enterprise which they managed. And here are our writers, living for years and years away from their literary sources, and no one says as much as a word to them, as if it were quite all right, as if the second echelon for a fighter were not a temporary place but something like a permanent residence.

The whole work of the Union of Writers must be resolutely reorganised. Is it not obvious to you that since Gorky died there was nobody among the writers who could come up to his shoulder, if that? Among us there has never been, and possibly never will be, anyone who can equal Gorky in that boundless love which he inspired in the working class, in working people both in our country and far beyond its bounds, a love he deserved with his very life and his writing.

What did we decide to do after Gorky's death? We decided to set up a collective leadership of the Union of Writers with Comrade Fadeyev at the head, but nothing good came of it. Meanwhile, the Union was gradually changing from the creative association which it was supposed to be into an administrative organisation, and in spite of the fact that the secretariat, the sections of prose, poetry, dramaturgy, and criticism held their meetings regularly, the technical staff was doing a full-time job, and messengers were rushed here and there—no books appeared. For a country like ours, a few good books a year is hopelessly little.

Expressions which sound rather strange to me have come into the writers' usage, for example: "So-and-so has gone on a creative trip." Why must a writer go on a "creative trip" when his whole life ought to be a creative journey? Or better still: "The secretary of the Writers' Union has been granted a year's creative leave." What is it if not a frank admission of the fact that before his "creative leave" the writer had done no writing, being otherwise engaged! Well, and so one thing led to another. Fadeyev turned out to be a sufficiently ambitious General Secretary and refused to reckon with the principle of collective leadership. The other secretaries found it impossible to work with him. This business dragged on for fifteen years. By joint effort we robbed Fadeyev of the fifteen best years of his creative life, and as a result we have neither a General Secretary nor a writer. Could we not have warned Fadeyev in good time, and said to him: "A lust for power is no use at all in the writing business. The Union of Writers is not an army unit and even less so a punishment battalion, and none of the writers are going to stand at attention before you, Comrade Fadeyev. You are an intelligent and gifted writer, you are attracted by the industrial theme, so why don't you go and live in Magnitogorsk, Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk or Zaporozhye for three or four years and write a good novel about the working class?"

Small matter if this had deprived us of Fadeyev the Gen-

eral Secretary, because then we would have regained Fadeyev the writer, and gladly welcomed him back with a new book, possibly as good as his *Rout*.

What did Fadeyev do these last fifteen years? Did he guide the Union of Writers ideologically and politically? No, we have always believed with good reason that it's the Party that guides us. For years Fadeyev kept busy attending literary discussions, delivering reports, distributing the flats among writers and never wrote a word. He had no time for such "nonsense" as writing books. But when he was relieved for a few years, beginning with 1944, from his secretarial duties, he got down to work immediately and in a very short space of time produced an excellent book about the Young Guard in Krasnodon. None of us prose writers have anything like Fadeyev's wonderful gift for writing about young people with such stirring emotion, and in *Young Guard* this trait of his big talent was revealed to the full.

A few years passed, and once again Fadeyev the writer vanished, and Fadeyev the manager of literature reappeared. What truly fabulous transformation one has to witness sometimes! And the wonderland where such transformations take place is only a stone's throw away—in Vorovsky Street.

Could not a person of smaller stature be found in our Party for this administrative job? And if anyone says that Fadeyev was the art director of the writers' ensemble, if I may put it like this, it is not true either. Neither Fedin, Gladkov, Leonov, nor any of the big writers came to Fadeyev for instructions on how to write novels. Each of us has his own manner of writing, his own vision of the world, his own style and Fadeyev could not be and never was an indisputable authority for us in questions of artistic skill. Prose writers did not go to Fadeyev just as Yakub Kolas, Rylsky, Tychina, Tvardovsky, Tikhonov, Marshak, Isakovsky, Shchipachev, nor any of the big poets now come for lessons to Surkov. All of them, and Surkov himself too, know very well that in an orchestra there are other things besides drums, cymbals, and such percussion instruments. So what could they learn from Surkov? And yet poets, prose writers, critics and playwrights all sought out Gorky.... If none of their comrades ever brought their problems to such literary leaders as Fadeyev or Surkov, or have any intention of doing so, what, one might ask, do we need such leaders for?

Do you imagine that things would be different if, say, Sholokhov or Simonov headed the Union? Not at all. Everything

would remain the same, and our writers would be none the better off.

It is essential to relieve writers of the fuss and bother of too many meetings, of everything that takes their mind off their main job of writing books. As it is, we are much the poorer for the fact that big masters like Leonov, Tikhonov, Fedin and others wasted such a lot of precious time on all manner of sittings, instead of which they should have been free to study life and write. It's time we put an end to it. Readers want us to give them books and not speeches at meetings. It is imperative to help writers come into direct touch with life, they have to turn to life full-face. To do this no special resolutions have to be passed.

I think it would be simpler to ask the Union to ascertain the writers' wishes by talking the matter over with each of them. After all, surely not all of them want to live in big towns without ever venturing outside for a change? Why should we not help those writers who want to do some serious work on novels dealing with the collective farm or state farm scene to go for three or four years to any rural locality they choose? We might build houses for them to live in where they could write to their heart's content. Needless to say, they will come to Moscow, Minsk, Kiev or whatever town they left any time they like, but for the most part they will live among the heroes of their future novel, and that will be one guarantee of success. We do build houses for engineers and technicians, don't we? So why should we not do the same for writers? I am speaking about this because the work of a writer is, in fact, a domestic craft. If he's not out hunting for material, he is at home, writing at his table, and his work cannot be put into the hours of an ordinary working day. Therefore, the idea of living in a communal flat at, say, a state farm is utterly unacceptable. It's one thing if there's just one primus stove hissing in the kitchen, and only one wife—even if she is very talkative—in the house, because then there's a fighting chance for the husband to get the quiet he needs. But it's quite another thing if there are eight primus stoves hissing in the kitchen and eight women dead set on outtalking one another. Work is out of the question here.

Writers who decide to make this move, must treat the business seriously and take their entire household along—wife, children, and all their chattels. This is no "creative trip". It would be a good idea if they were helped with the purchase of cars so they could travel here and there, as their work re-

quires, and be spared the need to flag cars in the middle of the road or be forever dependent on the pleasure of the director of the local Machine and Tractor Station, the secretary of the district Party committee, or the chairman of the regional Soviet.

Not all the writers, of course, must make the move to the villages. Only those who want to get a first-hand knowledge of collective farm life. Writers who plan to write about the working class or the urban intelligentsia will be welcome in any industrial or other town in the Soviet Union.

A writer who is a member of the Party will, on arrival in his chosen rural home, join the local Party organisation and will certainly be able to make himself useful doing something that will not interfere with his main work. A non-Party writer will not refuse to take on some public duties. As for material, it will be there for the taking. Just look sharp and grasp what's happening around you! When a writer really lives the life of the people, suffers their sufferings, rejoices in their joys, and feels a sense of personal involvement in their cares and needs, the book he writes will be a real book, the kind that touches the hearts of the readers.

Why shouldn't, say, Panferov, a Volga man, live for a few years on the banks of the Volga and write a novel which would make the readers feel that for them too this great river was "Mother Volga" and not an aunt thrice removed? Paustovsky, a writer who has magnificent command of sound Russian language and is endowed with the power of the subtlest observation, makes a point of coming every year to the Meshchera lowlands which have been so picturesquely described here by Comrade Larionov. Why not help Paustovsky settle for good somewhere on the banks of the Oka? I am certain that when Paustovsky the angler has no bite for a long time he gazes at the collective farm world about him with the interested gaze of an artist. This contemplation holds promise of a really sound book. Perventsev, too, might quit Moscow for a time and make his home again in his native Kuban country. Sergei Vasilyev, a gifted poet, paid only a short visit to his birthplace in Kurgan Region but he brought back some good poetry. If he makes a longer stay he'll produce a cycle of verse, or perhaps even a long poem. It would also do Permitin, who hails from the Altai Region, more good than harm to return to his native parts, and within a few years we'd be the richer for another book. Babayevsky, deciding quite correctly that his *Gold Star Bearer* would not fetch him the fourth

Stalin prize, has gone off to China for three years, so rumour has it. Oh well, if he brings back a good novel about our friends the Chinese peasants it will be a wonderful gift for all of us.

All those writers who make the decision to re-settle somewhere in our vastest of countries will have to be properly helped because the idea that all writers have money to burn is nothing but a silly myth.

Here I'm saying this to you, comrades, but my heart is not in the right place: there's Comrade Zverev, our iron Finance Minister, listening to my far-fetched plans, and I'm sure he's already regarding me as his class enemy. What can I say to set his mind at rest? In the first place, there are a lot of ifs and whens before my plan becomes reality. In the second, if only one out of every three re-settled writers comes up with a good, badly needed book, the outlay will be amply justified. And to really placate dear Comrade Zverev I can solemnly swear here and now that I shall never, as long as I live, write to *Pravda* again on the subject of fruit trees belonging to collective farmers. After all, what business is it of mine? Comrade Zverev has more expert knowledge on this subject than I have. He knows when the farmers should chop down their fruit trees and when to plant new ones. So, I'll leave it to him.

I should like to draw your special attention to the young writers who will eventually take our place. Everything that I have said about the writers of the older generation and the need for some of them to change their environment fully applies to the more talented of the young ones with the only difference that they'll need more financial assistance and must be handled with greater care. Almost all of them work for a living, and if they quit their job in order to write their first big novel or a collection of short stories they will find themselves in very hard straits. Some of them, teachers for instance, will inevitably have to give up school for good, as it is impossible to be a teacher and a writer at the same time. This will be obvious to everyone who knows, even if only casually, how terribly packed is the working day of our school teachers.

After the first writers' congress Gorky said: "We must develop a whole army of excellent writers—we must!" These words of Gorky should never be forgotten, comrade delegates. Remember, when Gorky died there remained such writers as Sergeyev-Tsensky, Prishvin, Serafimovich, Yakub Kolas, Glad-

kov, Olga Forsh, Marietta Shaginyan, Veresayev, Alexei Tolstoi, Novikov-Priboi, Shishkov, and others. They are the veterans. The others joined the ranks later, they are widely known writers today, but the youngest of them are already past fifty. Our replacements are slow to come. There are fewer young writers today than there were in 1936, the year of Gorky's death. All the greater is our responsibility for training the future authors. Writers grow slowly, and we must already now give serious thought to what will be happening in literature not just in the Sixth Five-Year-Plan period, but in twenty or twenty-five years from now, when hardly any of today's leading writers will be left.

We are all children of our great Communist Party. Each one of us, in thinking about the Party, always says mentally with enormous feeling: "You are like a mother to us, you reared us, you steeled us, you're guiding us through life along the only true road." And now, I shall say in conclusion:

My Party! You have a strong and clear-thinking collective mind and a mother's hands which can be both strict and tender. You will find a way to help your writers and when they, inspirited by your attention and concern, publish their new works that are worthy of you, our Party, and our country, it is you whom the grateful Soviet and foreign readers will thank in the first place.

1956

THE UKRAINE'S GREAT SON

Forever to be remembered are the glorious names of our Motherland's great sons whose hearts, talents and thoughts were dedicated to the people that gave them birth. One such name is Ivan Franko....

The 100th anniversary of his birth is celebrated by the peoples of the Soviet Union and, in the first place, my kinsmen the Ukrainians.

I want to add my own modest voice to the million-strong chorus of voices, and express my love and gratitude to this great writer, a great son of the Ukraine.

1956

TO HUNGARIAN WRITERS

Events in Hungary have upset me, a Soviet citizen, writer and Communist, to the depths of my soul. These events are all the more painful because they were largely brought about by the gross mistakes made by the former leaders of People's Hungary who were called upon to build socialism and create a better life for the people.

Another reason why these events are so hard to take is that my colleagues, the Hungarian writers, who very bravely spoke up against these mistakes, failed to raise their voices against the reaction at the right moment when there was utter confusion.

What makes the situation so dramatic is that the way out of the impasse is still not clear to many people. But I am an optimist, I must say. And in defence of my optimism I should like to draw a parallel between the events in Hungary and what took place in Don country during the Civil War. Apart from convinced counter-revolutionaries, there were also people who had blindly drifted into the Whiteguard movement, but eventually most of them realised their mistake and became active builders of socialism.

I sincerely believe in the lucid wisdom of the courageous and hard-working Hungarian nation, and I wholeheartedly hope that in the coming year the Hungarian working people, guided by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' party, will make a worthy contribution to the cause of progress and peace in the world.

1956

KEEP IN STEP WITH THE PARTY, WITH THE PEOPLE

In view of the coming celebrations of the 40th anniversary of Soviet power, it is especially unpleasant to remember how far we, writers, have fallen behind life, and yet our professional bitterness is tempered with a feeling of civic pride: look what huge strides our Party and people are making from one enormous and already settled problem to the next, which is more enormous still, such as the radical reorganisation of management in industry. So how could we be expected to keep

up? And indeed, if you take a practical view of life, you'll agree that no particular harm was done because I did not go further than the 1930s in my *Virgin Soil Upturned,* but think how terrible it would have been if our agriculture and industry had still remained at the 1930s level!

Still, each one of us writers would like to keep in step with the Party, with the people. That's why I myself am so anxious to finish my *Virgin Soil Upturned* as quickly as possible, and really get down to my novel *They Fought for Their Country.*

1957

THE TREASURE-STORE OF FOLK WISDOM

The greatest wealth of a people is its language. The fabulous treasures of the human mind and human experience are accumulated over the millenniums, to live forever in words. And perhaps in no other form is the wisdom of the people reflected so powerfully and comprehensively, and its national history, social relations, way of life and world outlook are traceable in such crystalline compactness, as in proverbs.

The terse and imaginative Russian language is especially rich in proverbs. There are thousands and thousands of them. They seem to fly on wings from one century into the next, from one generation to the other, and the distance whither this winged wisdom is heading in its flight is out of sight....

Proverbs were born in different epochs, and these clear-cut folk sayings and aphorisms embody a vast diversity of human relations. From the abyss of time, they bring to us the tale of people's happiness and tragedies, of tears and laughter, love and enmity, belief and unbelief, truth and falsehood, honesty and deceit, industry and idleness, justice and prejudice.

Soviet people will take all that is finest in the Russian proverbs, and discard that which has become obsolete and will be of no use to them in building up the new world.

Our patriotic pride is cast in the steel of such proverbs as: "Whosoever steps on Russian soil should mind his step", "Stand fast on your native soil till the last", "Don't fear to fight for a cause that's right".

We shall also repeat these folk wisdoms: "Idle hands like work done by others", "Measure your strength before you raise the load", "A load is light on someone else's back", "Just watching people work won't keep the wolf from your door", "An hour's lateness takes a year to catch up", "Words are not arrows, yet they hit the mark".

But proverbs which bear the stamp of national enmity, serf mentality, scorn of women's rights, and religious superstition —in short, proverbs which were influenced by the Church, and also class and caste considerations, and did not express the natural wisdom of the people—are utterly foreign to our contemporaries. Protest against this influence is voiced in numerous very apt sayings, some of them worded with killing sarcasm and others with sad bitterness. Here are a few: "The rich man would have to eat money if the poor man did not provide him with bread", "Easy on the incense or you'll blacken the icons", "The service has been sung with no good to anyone", "Praise the rye when it's been reaped, and your master when he's forever asleep".

The centuries of social injustice and worship of force and hypocrisy cultivated in the people many freakish concepts and false wisdom. There are quite a lot of things in the old proverbs that will outrage a healthy feeling. But all this is left behind by our fast-moving life, and our new socialist experience engenders a new worldly wisdom.

Thus, time continually washes the gold-bearing sand of folk sayings, and polishes the bits of gold scattered in it to reflect the life, struggle and traditions of countless generations.

The publication of Russian proverbs and sayings, collected in the last century over the course of many decades by V. I. Dahl, the outstanding dialectician and writer, will greatly further our knowledge of the inexhaustible wealth of our national culture, and will help us to gain a better command of our great and powerful language.

1957

A LETTER TO THE NAVY

My dear sailor friends,

I thank you for your letter and for your interest in my work.

You want to know why I made my Davidov a Baltic sailor.

Davidov, you see, had several prototypes. I met many sailors, had talks with them, and saw how they went about the work to which the Party had assigned them. And wherever they were, they always introduced their splendid, revolutionary naval traditions.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin highly commended the performance of sailors in the October Revolution. They fought as valiantly in the Civil War, and were as active in building up Soviet power.

This is what gave me the idea to make Davidov a sailor. A man who came to the village to manage its first collective farm had to have courage, endurance, a good sense of humour, a way with people, and also the experience of living in a collective. All these qualities, plus an infinite devotion to the Party and the cause of communism, I saw in the sailors who had received their training in the Soviet Navy.

This, I think, is all I can say in answer to your letter.

My warmest wishes to you, our glorious sailors, on the 40th birthday of our Armed Forces.

1958

From A SPEECH ADDRESSED TO THE ELECTORATE OF TAGANROG

Dear Taganrogians, dear countrymen!

I should like this conversation of ours to be informal, without any pomp and ceremony.

I have been elected deputy to four convocations. This is the fifth time you are going to vote for me, and if I am elected, do you know what I shall propose to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR? I'll propose that a ban be put on dull, formal speeches. The kind that are read from scribbled notes.

I said to the secretary of the city Party committee who was sitting here next to me: "Too many speakers." And he replied: "They've got to say how much they think of you." I said again: "If a person has nothing worth hearing to say, he'd best keep quiet."

What am I expected to say to you? It is customary for a deputy to give his electors an account of what he has done. Is our work accountable, really? It's easier done than said, you

know. There are two of us candidates present. Nikolai Vasilyevich Kiselev and I have been close friends for years, but this doesn't mean that we never disagree. A regional committee secretary who is prepared to stay up all night if it's an urgent matter and calls Veshenskaya at two o'clock in the morning, is a good secretary, I find him easy to work with, and consequently between us we do cope with some local problems. And we have all kinds of problems.

As you know, besides being a deputy I'm also a writer. You know how it is: sometimes you just can't get a chapter to go the way you want it to go, you don't like what you have written, and you can't sleep. You have to go out for a while, have a smoke, take a look at the Don, and think things over. Once I came out at four in the morning, before sunrise, in summer it was, and outside my gate I saw a trap, a pair of unharnessed oxen, two empty petrol drums, and a Cossack woman who was making straight for me. "I've come to you with my trouble, seeing you're our deputy," she said. What happened was that a slice of six hundred sq metres had been cut away from her kitchen garden. The cut was not lawful, but that's beside the point. I asked her in a quiet, gentle manner: "But, my dear woman, why do you come here at four in the morning?" And she replied: "But I didn't waken you. You were up and about —I saw you...." Still, I persisted: "Would you go to the district executive committee at seven in the morning knowing they don't start work till nine?" She said: "But you're not an office, are you?" and that put the lid on it. Of course, I wasn't an "office". Oh well, I said, state your case....

Russians are a stubborn lot.

I recall one frontline episode. On the approaches to Kharkov in 1942 our army was giving hell to an Italian division entitled "Victoria", and I was in that battle with the regiment. The commander of a battery was taken prisoner by our men. He was a Roman, an architect, and wore a neatly trimmed small square beard. This man had been wounded in the neck. The chief of our intelligence interrogated him on military matters. And I, being a writer, was curious about other things, such as what brand of cigarettes he smoked—aha, Bulgarian cigarettes—what sort of food was given to Italian soldiers, and why he was wearing shoes when Italian officers generally wore leggings. "You really are a strange lot, you Russians," he said to me. "Why?" I asked. "I fell when the bullet hit me, and there was a Russian, a private with a submachine gun, on the

ground too. I had fired at him three times and missed. Now this chap ran up to me, clubbed me with the butt of his tommy-gun, pulled off my leggings, gave me a good shaking and propped me against the wall of a cottage. My hands were trembling. He rolled a cigarette, stuck it into my mouth, then made another one for himself, lit up, and rushed off to fight again."

Listen, isn't it a fine mix-up: to club a prisoner, pull off his leggings, give him a cigarette, and be off into battle again! That's the Russian for you. The Russian soldier. Will we ever be able to reveal all the inner workings of his soul in our books? I'm damned if I know....

1958

READERS WANT NEW BOOKS ABOUT THE PRESENT DAY

One can only welcome the news that *Literatura i Zhizn* will from time to time devote pages and whole issues to the work of writers from the different regions and autonomous republics of the Russian Federation.

Let us take a look at the literary map of Soviet Russia. Moscow and Leningrad are not the only two places where books well known throughout the country are written. Some of the authors live in the Far East, in the Urals, in Siberia, on the Don, Kuban, Volga and Terek, and all of them serve the cause of the Party and the Soviet people with their truthful pen. Their place of residence is certainly not the yardstick with which readers measure the worth of their contribution to literature. Writers cannot be divided into metropolitans and provincials.

Let the newspaper every now and again look over Russia's literary field without missing a single furrow. Let it see the young shoots, the new green, and let it not deny its stern attention to those authors who tend to make leave unploughed patches.

I cannot, naturally, remain indifferent to the fact that today's paper has been given over to Don writers, people from my own home-country. They have indeed earned this privilege, for in their books there is a breath of life. In our literature, the Don platoon can be recognised right away by its smart, firm step.

But this privilege imposes a certain responsibility on them. I hope my fellow writers will forgive the reminder that readers are waiting for new books about the present day. Nor must they take offence at the suggestion that they should continue to perfect their skill. A word which the writer draws from the wealth of the powerful Russian language must every time be that only word which finds its way straight to the reader's heart.

My heartiest greetings to my Don fellow writers!

1960

TO THE EDITORS OF *PRAVDA*

I sincerely thank my dear *Pravda* friends, the editorial and printing staff, for their kind telegram. As you have correctly observed, I have indeed been writing in your newspaper for thirty years already. This is quite a large part of a person's life and it entitles me to a bit of space to thank all my friends —readers and comrades in war and peace—who have congratulated me on winning the Lenin Prize.

1960

INTERVIEW GIVEN TO A CORRESPONDENT OF *LITERATURNAYA GAZETA*

What was the aim of your trip to Western Europe?

My trip to England, Italy and France was mainly connected with the publication of the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned.* Besides, I was invited to England for the Tolstoi celebrations, but unfortunately I was unable to arrive in London in time for the occasion.

The first part of *Virgin Soil Upturned,* as you know, came out almost thirty years ago—quite a lifetime ago, in fact. The second part has now been translated and published in England and Italy. In Paris I was told that the French translation was to come out soon, this spring.

What publishing houses brought out the book, and how was it received by readers in Europe?

In England it was the well-known Putnam publishing house. In Italy, I gave Editori Riuniti the right to publish all my books for the world market. And in France, *Virgin Soil Upturned* will be brought out by Gallimard, one of the biggest publishers in Paris. I must mention that Gallimard introduced me to the French readers back in the 1930s, long before the war, and in 1940 also brought out the last part of *And Quiet Flows the Don.*

My publishers tell me that the speed with which the second part of *Virgin Soil Upturned* was sold out testifies to its success with readers. They also tell me that the novel had a big press, and showed me a large number of reviews from vastly different papers, among them the London *Times* where my book was commented on in the Literary Supplement.

What other countries are planning to publish your book?

The Editori Riuniti has already concluded agreements for the publication of *Virgin Soil Upturned* with different publishers in the United States, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and other countries. At the moment, negotiations are under way with publishers in Greece and Israel. Putnam and Company, the publishing house in England, have sold a considerable part of their rather large impression of my novel in Australia, New Zealand, and some countries in Africa.

What other novels of yours have lately been published in the West?

I don't remember exactly. But I do know that in France last year the well-known Julliard Publishers brought out all the four volumes of my *And Quiet Flows the Don*, and in Italy—also last year—in addition to *Virgin Soil Upturned*, chapters from *They Fought for Their Country* were published, and also a volume of my *Don Stories* in which *The Fate of a Man* was included.

Would you tell us about your impressions of places and people?

I arrived in England on Christmas Eve, and so had a chance to see what English holidays were like—a time when the towns are all but deserted. I was in London and Edinburgh, and travelled a little in Scotland. In Italy, where I arrived on New Year's Eve and where the holidays according to local custom are very noisy, I was in Rome, Naples, Salerno and Palermo. I was to meet Sig. Ungaretti, Chairman of the European Committee of Writers, but the meeting did not take place owing to his illness. My trip to Sicily was a memorable experience.

In Palermo I met Danilo Dolci, a gifted writer who won the International Lenin Prize, and his friends and family. I am hoping to reciprocate the hospitality of Signor and Signora Dolci, and of Vittorio Nisticò, the chief editor of *L'ora*, a democratic newspaper, in Veshenskaya where I have invited them to be my guests this autumn.

Altogether it was an interesting trip. Louis Aragon has invited me to come to France in the spring of 1962 in connection with the publication of my collected works (I mean *And Quiet Flows the Don, Virgin Soil Upturned, The Fate of a Man, They Fought for Their Country*, in short everything of mine that has been brought out by French publishers). I accepted the invitation.

1961

ABOUT SEMYON DAVIDOV

(From a talk addressed to the workers of the Kirov Plant in Leningrad)

Dear friends,

People often ask me why Semyon Davidov, the main character of *Virgin Soil Upturned*, is a worker from the Kirov Plant and was, in the past, a sailor of the Baltic Fleet.

More than thirty years ago, when I was a very young writer, I wanted thus to express my profound respect for Petrograd's working class and its glorious revolutionary deeds and traditions. This was my tribute of admiration for the workers of Leningrad, the workers of the Kirov Plant particularly.

My second tribute of admiration goes to the glorious sailors of the Baltic Fleet, whose deeds and revolutionary traditions have my profound respect too.

I am proud that Semyon Davidov, the hero of *Virgin Soil Upturned,* chairman of the collective farm he organised in our Don country, came from your midst, that he is one of you....

It is wonderful to see the new generation of workers who owe their experience and training to Semyon Davidov and other people of his age, whose fine traditions they have inherited and are carrying on.

We came here from the Don not just to tell you about ourselves, but also to invite you to pay us a visit. Please come and see how vigorously life is blossoming out on the soil watered with Semyon Davidov's sweat and blood.

1961

CONSOLIDATION, AND ONCE AGAIN CONSOLIDATION!

In our troubled times, consolidation, and once again consolidation of the peace fighters is the vital task of the moment.

I feel that a particularly large share of the responsibility these days must be assumed by the intellectuals—people who work in the sphere of culture.

It is the person who invented the atomic bomb who must be the first to put a ban on it. True champions of culture never advocated and never will advocate the use of the atom for destructive purposes against mankind.

We have had several occasions to become convinced that a wrathful protest shattered the plans of those who want to unleash a nuclear war.

And so, let us reiterate our protest with redoubled force and say "no" to the bomb at our congress.

1962

FIDELITY TO THE IDEALS OF COMMUNISM

Perhaps in no other field of art is the ideological conflict as acute as it is in literature. In a novel where the inner world and political stand of the characters are disclosed, the author is unable to hide or even obscure his sympathies and antipathies, he cannot conceal his ideological credo from the reader.

To speak of writers separately means to speak about literature, for we are closely bound together by the continuity of artistic thinking and literary traditions. We, writers, are in fact a single chain made up of separate links.

Life in our day has proved that only art which serves the interests of the people will live in the masses and retain its right to further existence. And, naturally enough, art which satisfies the spiritual requirements of just one class, a class of enslavers, a parasitic class that is departing from the historical scene, is doomed to oblivion and death.

This can be seen very clearly from the history of modern literature. No matter how gifted Bunin was both in prose and poetry, he is almost forgotten, and little known to our readers, young people especially. And not because Bunin is not republished in the USSR. He is. Gorky and Serafimovich, on the

other hand, will not be forgotten. And yet they were Bunin's contemporaries, they entered the literary scene together but they served the people differently. And their works are appraised differently. Bunin was awarded the Nobel Prize for his *Life of Arseniev,* and yet Gorky was not thus honoured by the Swedish Academy for his *Life of Klim Samgin,* a work perfect in its finish and really encyclopaedic in its embracing description of all the strata and layers of society in tsarist Russia.

Similarly, the Swedish connoisseurs of literature failed to notice Gorky's excellent novel *The Artamonovs.* The same thing happened to Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood* and many other important works of Soviet prose.

As you will see, on the international arena the appraisal of works of art is also dictated by class interests. And this gives the lie to the statements of bourgeois theorists that art is by its very nature classless....

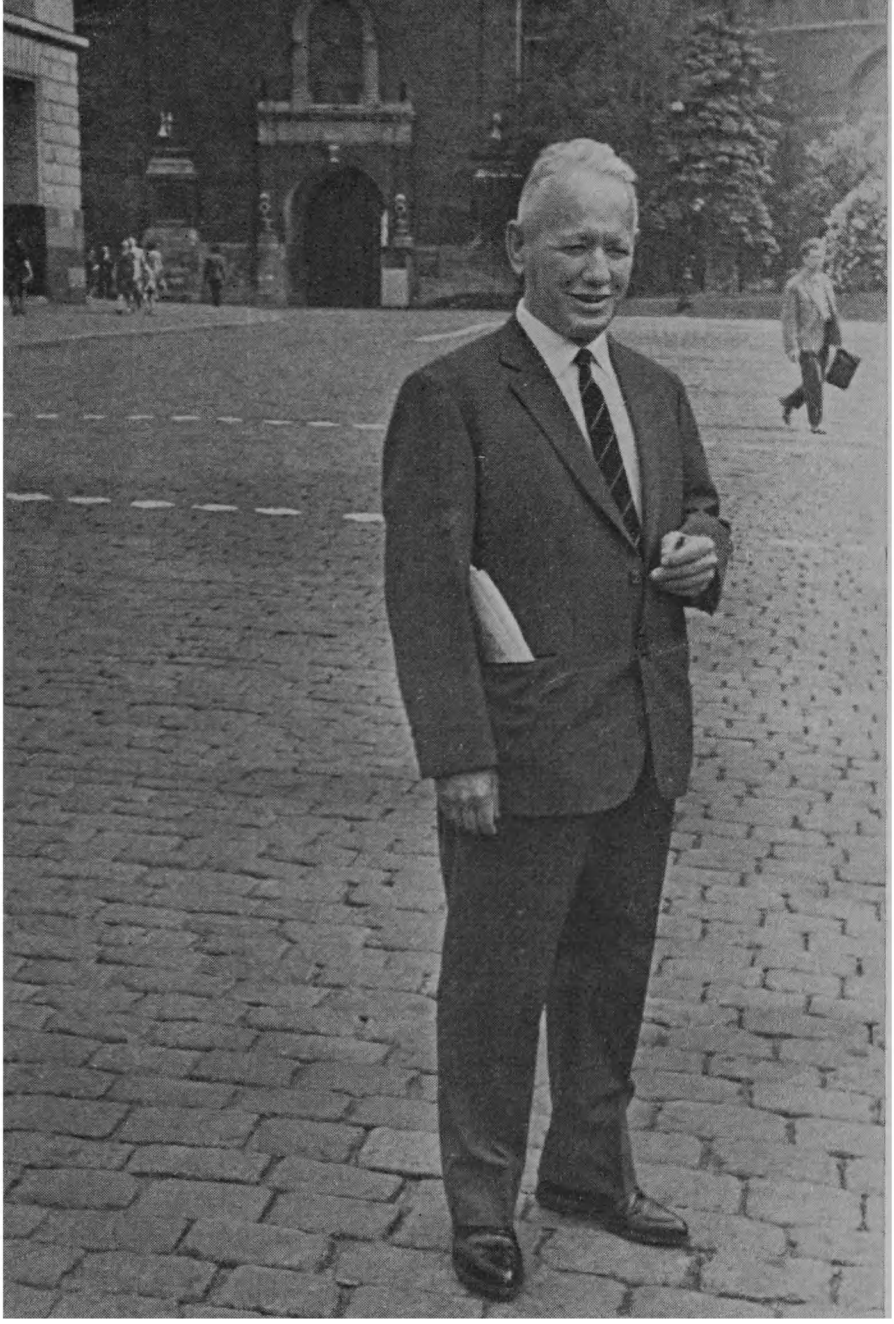
Soviet people throughout the country are celebrating the birth centenary of Alexander Serafimovich, an outstanding writer whose work, like the work of Gorky, Mayakovsky, Alexei Tolstoi, Yesenin and Sergeyev-Tsensky will never know oblivion in our country or in the world, and will be inherited by the coming generations as a cultural treasure.

The Iron Flood will forever remain one of the assets of Soviet literature. Among the books written by Serafimovich this novel is especially precious to us because it was one of the first two books—the other being Furmanov's *Revolt*—to give an impressive portrayal of those heroes who marched in the front ranks of fighters for Soviet power, for the great cause of communism, a portrayal, what is more, infused with love and gratitude for these first soldiers of the Revolution.

Alexander Serafimovich's whole life, just like his work, was essentially revolutionary. Till the end he honestly served progress, the revolution, and our Communist Party.

We, the Don people, feel a special gratitude and warm regard for Serafimovich not just because he was born and bred in our part of the country, but also because he treated all people living there with the same fatherly kindness—be they Don Cossacks, newcomers to the Don, Kuban Cossacks, or the peasants of Stavropol region who took up arms to establish and consolidate Soviet power in the South of Russia, cementing its strength with their own blood.

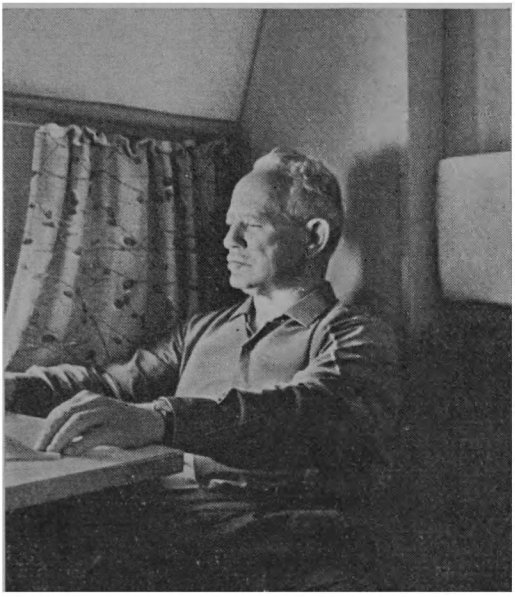
I had the good fortune to become closely acquainted with Comrade Serafimovich more than thirty years ago. In 1925,



In Moscow for the Fourth All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers

Sholokhov in the presidium of the Fourth All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers

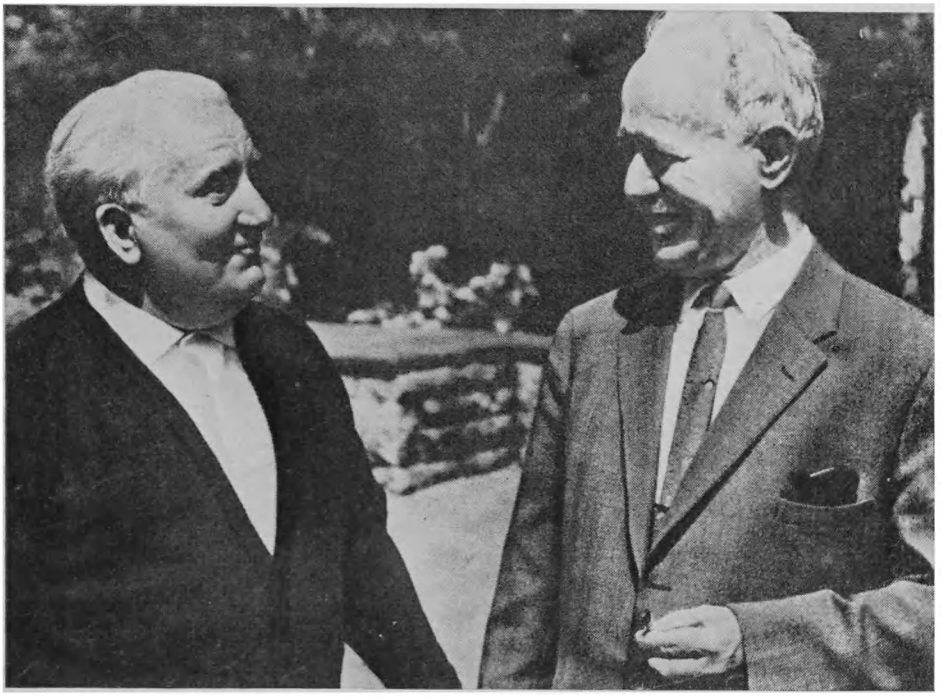
N. V. Podgorny congratulates the writer on the title of Hero of Socialist Labour



Bound for Europe

Sholokhov is received by János Kadar

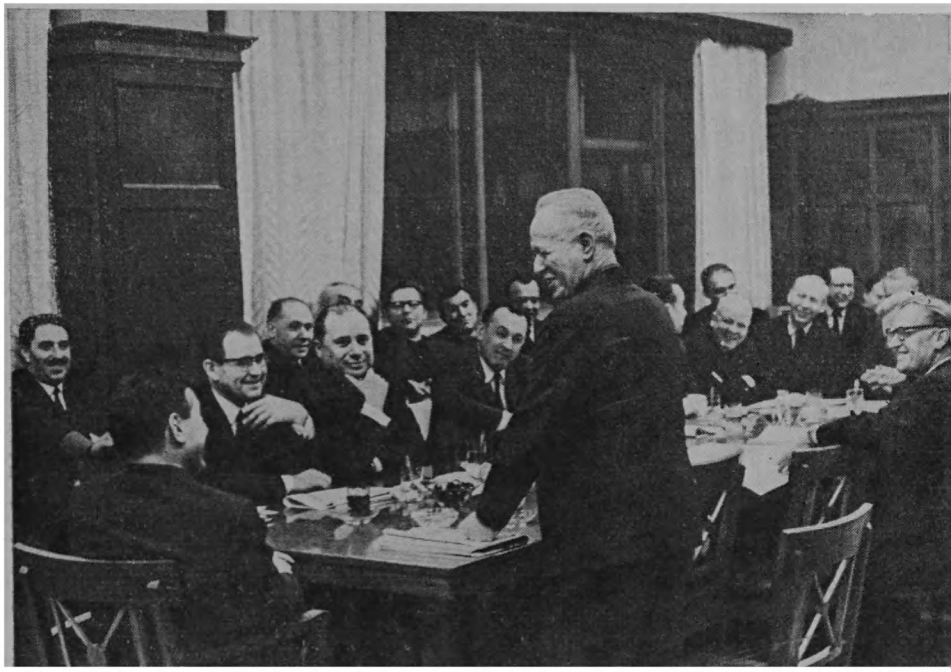
Walter Ulbricht presents Sholokhov with the Order of the Friendship of Nations Star



Dresden. Sholokhov in conversation with Willi Bredel

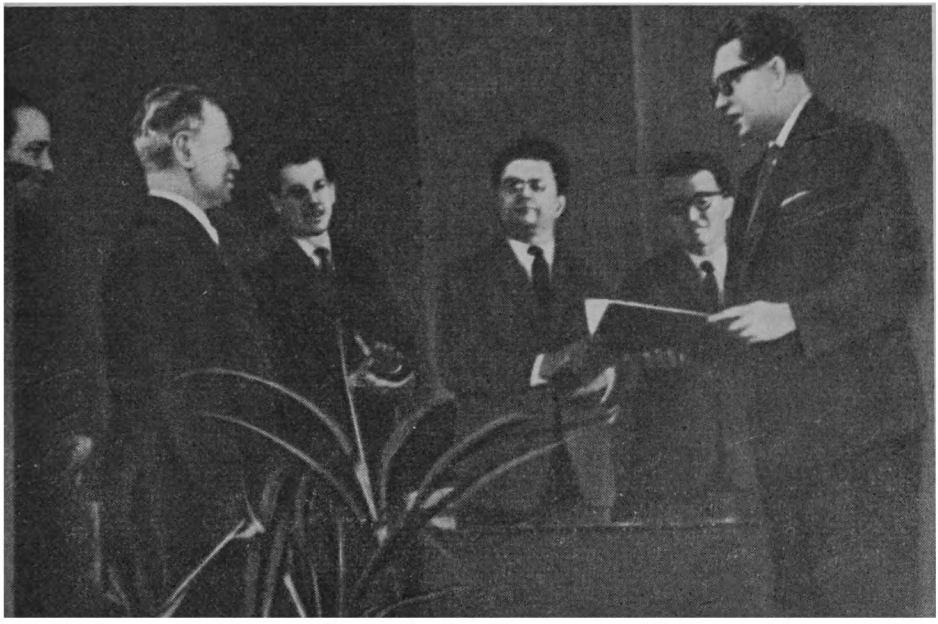
The German Democratic Republic. Authoress Anna Seghers welcomes the guest

Finnish writer Martti Larni wishes Sholokhov many happy returns of the day on his 60th birthday

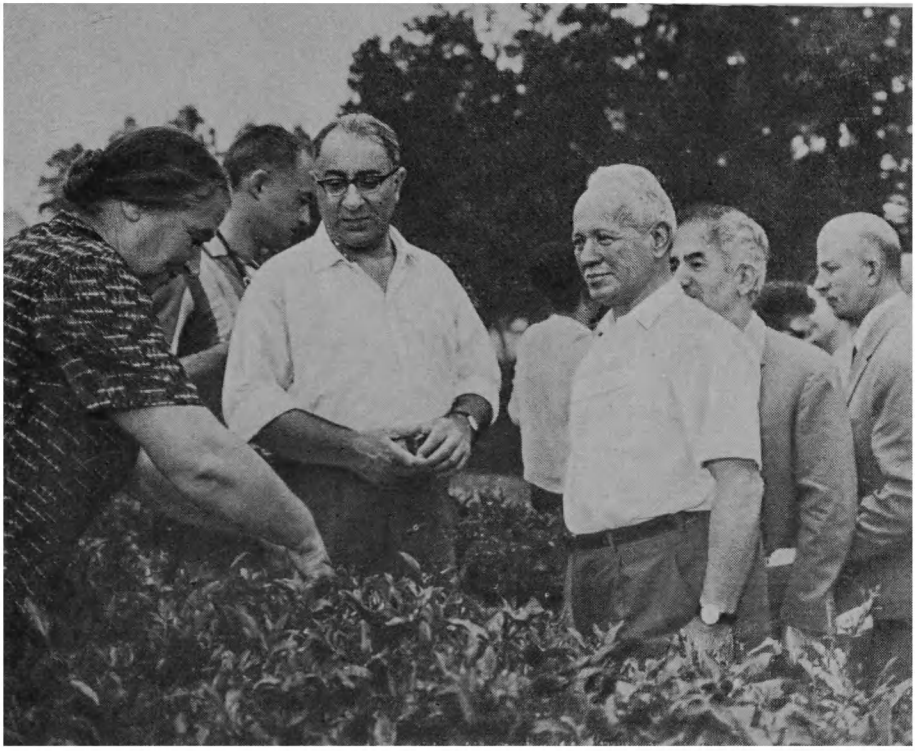


A guest of the *Pravda* staff

Veshenskaya. Professor Eberhard Brüning presents to the writer a diploma of Honorary Doctor of Philosophy of Leipzig University

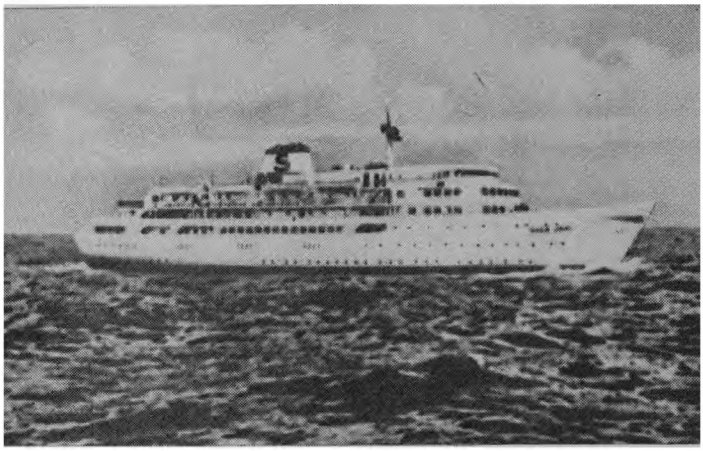


Georgia. Planting a tree in the "Druzhba" (Friendship) orchard



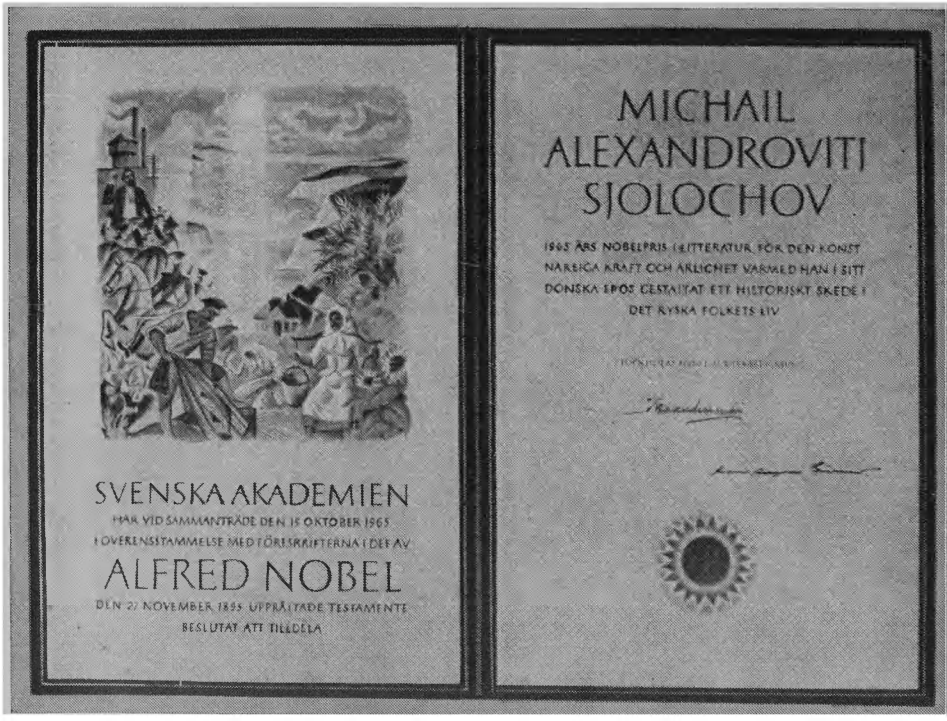
Sholokhov visits a tea plantation in Georgia

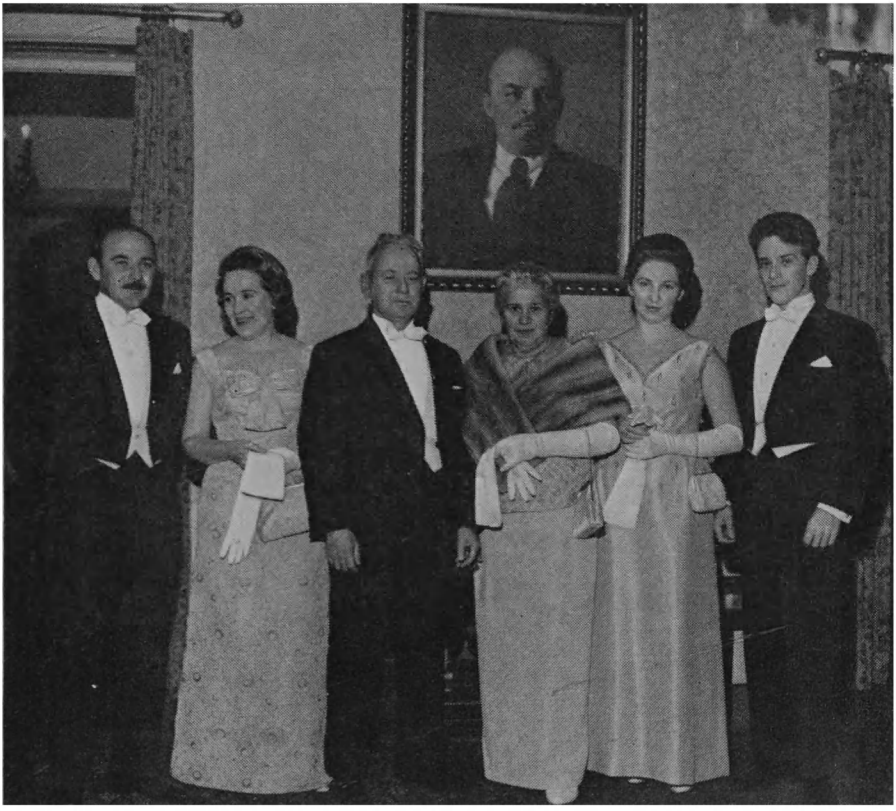
It was here in the Kazakh steppes that Sholokhov first learnt the news that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize



The *Svea Jarl* sails from Turku to Stockholm

The Nobel Prize certificate


SVENSKA AKADEMIEN
HAR VID SAMMANTRÄDE DEN 15 OKTOBER 1965
I ÖVERENSSTÄMMELSE MED FÖRESKRIFTERNA I DET AV
ALFRED NOBEL
DEN 27 NOVEMBER 1895 UPPRÄTTADE TESTAMENTE
BESLUTAT ATT TILLDELA
MICHAIL
ALEXANDROVITJ
SJOLOCHOV
1965 ÅRS NOBELPRIS I LITTERATUR FÖR DEN KONST
NÄRÄCA KRAFT OCH ÄRLIGHET VARMED HAN I SITT
DONSKA EPOS GESTALTAT ETT HISTORISKT SKEDE I
DET RYSKA FOLKETS LIV



At the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm. The Sholokhovs with their two sons and two daughters.
Left to right: Alexander, Svetlana, the writer and his wife Maria Petrovna, Maria and Mikhail

Årets nobelpristagare

MICHAIL SJOLOCHOV

STILLA FLYTER DON

— en nobelpristagares mästerverk — ett av sovjetlitteraturens kraftfullaste verk. En levande och storslagen skildring av Donkosackernas liv under ryska revolutionens och inbördeskrigets dramatiska dagar. **Del 1—5 I presentband 150:—**

Övriga Sjolochov-böcker:

DEN AZURBLÅ STÄPPEN
ETT MÄNNISKOÖDE
Tidens Klassiker 7:50

NYPLÖJD MARK
Tidens Bokklubb Inb. 14:50

SKÖRD VID DON
27:50, Inb. 32:50

SE FILMEN I TV

Romanerna filmades 1957—58 av den kände regissören Sergej Gerasimov och visas som serieavsnitt I TV under december. Filmen sänds i oavkortat skick för första gången i Sverige.

TIDEN • FIB

From a Swedish newspaper

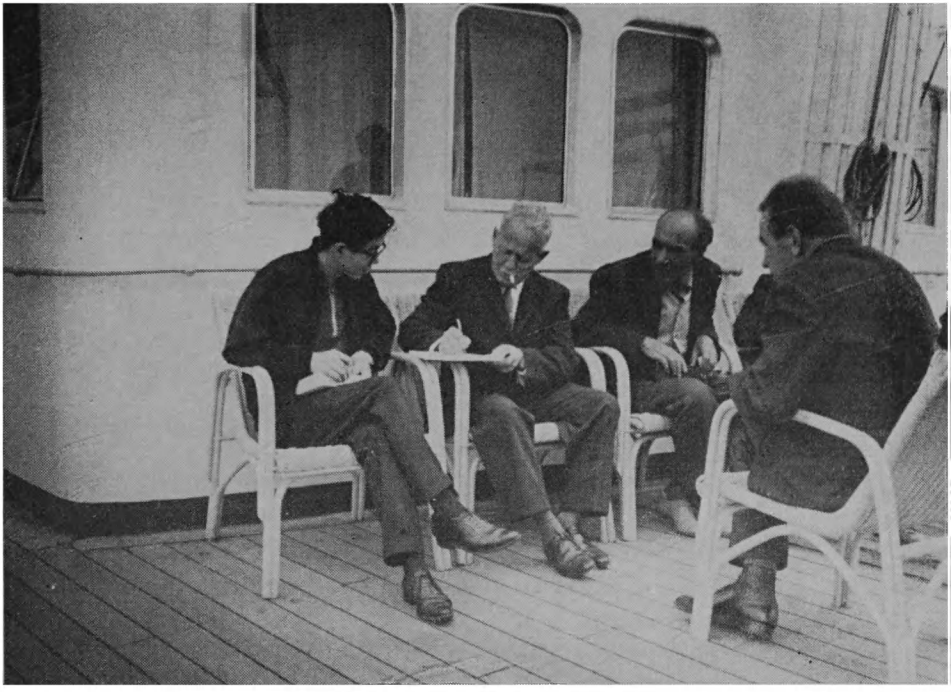
The King of Sweden congratulates Sholokhov

Khabarovsk. Vsevolod Sysoyev, director of the local lore museum, a scientist and famous tiger hunter, gives Mikhail Sholokhov a ginseng root for a present

In the woods near Nakhodka Bay

The *Baikal* sets sail for Honshu

Sholokhov signs an autograph for a Japanese reader



In Tokyo

the Moskovsky Rabochy publishers decided to bring out a collection of my short stories, and showed the galley proofs to Serafimovich who, upon reading them, said he would like to meet the young author. After that we often saw each other. Serafimovich came to stay with me in Veshenskaya, and when I happened to be in Moscow I always called on him. In 1930 he spent ten days or so with us in Veshenskaya. We went fishing together and boating on the Don, and Serafimovich always took the liveliest interest in everything that was happening in the Don country at the time.

Our acquaintance developed into close friendship in spite of the rather big disparity in our ages. I carry deep in my soul the image of this dear, unassuming man with a typically Cossack twinkle in his eye—a great writer who was always ready to give a helping hand to beginners, myself among them.

I think that what is taking place in our Don country just now is the best memorial to our wonderful, celebrated author, and our fellow countryman.

Once, in Veshenskaya, he saw a small steamboat which was going against the current, loudly slapping its pads on the water, and signalling for the pontoon bridge to be swung open. He said then: "This wonderful little ship is rousing the sleepy banks of the quiet Don to life, isn't it?"

If he were to see the life seething on his "quiet Don" just now, the old man, I'm sure, would be terribly pleased. We, readers, will always cherish the memory of this good, charming person, and treasure his books which serve the cause of communism.

1963

A LETTER TO CHARLES PERCY SNOW

I sincerely congratulate my dear friend on receiving the honorary title of Doctor of Philology from the State University in Rostov.

Soviet public organisations, including those of Rostov Region, extend their warmest congratulations to you, a prominent English author, and an active champion of peace and friendly relations between Britain and the USSR on the honorary title of Doctor of Philology conferred upon you by the State

University in Rostov, one of the oldest universities of Russia.

We are inviting you, your wife Pamela Hansford-Johnson, and members of your family to Rostov in May this year, if this is convenient, to receive the diploma.

With our passion for bettering world records, we are hoping that here, on the Don, we shall go one better on the wonderful, warm hospitality I found in St. Andrews.

Sincerely yours,

Mikhail Sholokhov

1963

SPEECH AT A SESSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF WRITERS

I have the honour of greeting you on behalf of the Union of Soviet Writers and wishing success to this present conference.

The people I see before me—not meaning the ladies, of course—are in the majority past their youth: they are writers and critics, undoubtedly burdened with both life and literary experience. So let us not be naive: it was not out of respect for my grey hair that I was given the honour of greeting you first, but simply because my good friend Alyosha Surkov and the rest of the Board of the Union of Soviet Writers know me for a pugnacious debater, and so they decided: "Let Sholokhov be the first of the Soviet writers to speak. After his salutatory speech it will be awkward for him to criticise the other speakers. . . ."

That's diplomacy for you, it never fails! But I feel exactly as my friends do: pleasant things are much easier to say than unpleasant ones.

Still, I should like to reserve the right to take the floor once again if someone starts planing the boards and knocking together a coffin to bury the novel in.

The question of whether the novel is "to be or not to be" simply does not arise for me, just as the question of whether to sow or not to sow his field does not arise for the peasant.

In the case of the peasant the question may be put like this: "How best to sow the field to reap a better harvest?"

It is precisely the same in my case, and the question is: how to make my novel so good that it will really serve my people and my readers with honour?

However, we shall speak about this when we come to the business part of our meeting.

We are opening our conference on a memorable day. The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty will be signed in Moscow today. Surely, if agreement was found between the big political leaders and diplomats, we writers should be able to agree on how best to serve people and the cause of peace with our art. If we don't, we'll never be able to face our readers. We must find a common tongue, it simply must be found!

We, Soviet writers, are welcoming you, our dear guests, with an open heart and true Russian hospitality.

The best conditions have been created for the work of this conference. It's a good thing it is taking place in Leningrad, for it's not as hot here as in Moscow. But if our debates become too heated, we can always shift the conference to Arkhangelsk or, say, Murmansk. In short, anywhere you like, so long as our discussion on the novel proceeds in a dignified, reasonable manner and yields good results.

We trust that this conference will prove a useful one, and hope that your sojourn in our country will be an enjoyable experience.

1963

WHEN WRITERS ARE FRIENDS WITH THEIR HEROES

Listen to what the working class says. Thirty-four years ago, or thirty-five to be precise, Semyon Davidov of *Virgin Soil Upturned* was not simply one of the twenty-five thousand men the Party sent to the countryside to carry out the collectivisation of farming, he was a worker of the Putilov (now Kirov) Plant.

Our spiritual kinship which began long ago is now receiving material affirmation. People here spoke well of friendship, of the friendship between writers and their heroes. It's really something when a writer becomes a member of the workers' family, as it were, and his fictitious literary hero comes back to him in the flesh. Such encounters are extremely useful, you know.

All these wonderful lads, my dear Savich and my no less dear Leonov, went to the Rostov Agricultural Machinery

Works. They demonstrated their methods and explained how they had worked on their own inventions, their own cutters, to the delight and admiration of the most highly qualified milling machine operators in the whole of Rostov. If we continue the practice of visits and the Kirov workers will invite, say, Ilya Kosonozhkin and some other of our workers to their plant, this will start a real exchange of experience between the qualified workers of town and village. There is a lot that can be learnt from the Kirov workers, and we for our part will always be glad to welcome them in our Don country.

1964

BOOKS ABOUT THE GLORY OF THE WORKING CLASS ARE NEEDED

The arrival of the group of workers and engineers from the Leningrad Kirov Plant in Veshenskaya has been a memorable event. We had some very useful conversations on literature, which were all the more interesting because our guests were themselves engaged in literary pursuits, writing the history of their plant whose publication is timed for the 50th anniversary of Soviet power. They asked me to write the preface for their book, which I am at present doing with pleasure.

The history of the Putilov (Kirov) Plant was made by people like Mikhail Gavrilovich Alexeyev, the oldest gunner there, who has worked in the plant's shops for sixty years; Nikolai Vasilyevich Skvortsov, a former sailor of the Baltic Fleet, one of the twenty-five thousand, a collective-farm chairman, and once again an industrial worker; milling-machine operators Yevgeny Savich and Ivan Leonov—innovators in their line; Hero of the Soviet Union Fyodor Dyachenko, a sharpshooter in the war; and hundreds and thousands of men like them. The history of the plant is a chronicle of working-class generations who accomplished the Revolution, defended the honour and freedom of their country in the war, and are now building communism.

One should like to see more books about our factories and plants, written on the same lines as the history of the Kirov Plant which has been decorated with four Government Orders.

I am addressing an appeal through the *Pravda* and the workers' newspaper *Trud* to all the worker-correspondents to

compile a history of their enterprise. Books about the glory of the working class are very badly needed. Writers and journalists will help all they can.

1964

FOR A STRONGER ALLIANCE BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ART

Dear residents of Veshenskaya, dear Kirovites, our good friends and very welcome guests!

This is the last day of your stay in Veshenskaya, your last day on the Don soil. Tomorrow you'll be off to the Middle Don, and from there to the mouth of the river. I know that you will be welcomed everywhere as dear and honoured guests, because in your person the Don will be honouring the representatives of Lenin's great city and the famous Kirov Plant. However, we are convinced that no *stanitsa,* no town on the Don will better us in the sincere cordiality of their welcome. I have quite a few reasons for asserting this. First of all, a group of Veshenskaya people went to Leningrad as your guests in the beginning of 1961, and so we owe you a debt of hospitality. And secondly, our friendship began not three or four years ago, but nearer thirty-four when your workmate Semyon Davidov stepped into the midst of life from the pages of my book to help the Party put through the collectivisation of farming.

I am mentioning this, perhaps, once too often not to tickle my literary vanity but merely to stress that our Veshenskaya people have a priority claim on your friendship. And we have tried to repay your warm hospitality extended to us in 1961 with redoubled heartiness.

There have been many guests in my home these last few years. Foreigners, too. Who did not walk on our Veshenskaya soil! Germans, Englishmen, Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Finns, and many others. My profession obliges me to receive writers and publishers from many countries of the world. With those of them whose political views are close to mine I have made really good friends. But a polite welcome is one thing, and a welcome from the bottom of one's heart is quite another. Dear Kirovites, that's how we welcome you—from the bottom of our hearts.

Look what a remarkable detachment of the working class

the Kirov Plant has sent us! There are people of three generations here, and all of them outstanding personalities to a man! Though the introductions have been made, my fellow villagers may not have remembered all the names. Take Nikolai Vasilyevich Skvortsov, for one. Isn't he a typical Davidov? Even their life stories tally: Skvortsov was also a Baltic Fleet sailor, and in 1930 he too was one of the twenty-five thousand and was also appointed chairman of a collective farm, with the only difference that the farm was in Kalinin Region and not here.

To be sure, these thirty-four years have slightly aged both the author of the book and the second Davidov, putting a touch of rime on their hair. But if our country needs us, we shall again be prepared to serve in the ranks or work in defence. And this is how we understand an alliance between industry and art. I should like to speak about another dear guest of ours—Mikhail Gavrilovich Alexeyev. He is no longer a young man, as you can see for yourselves. But what it does to a man to work for sixty years in industry! He's still quite a ladies' man I've been told in confidence.

I had some writer friends from Moscow and Rostov staying with me at the same time as the Kirovites. Besides fishing, bathing, and drinking toasts, we also talked about important matters. The Kirovites presented their perfectly legal claims to us, and accused us of writing too few books about the present day and the working class.

At first the writers took up an all-round defence, and held their own quite staunchly. But then, under pressure of the Kirovites' superior forces, as they say in war despatches, or rather under pressure of their reasonable claims, the writers were compelled to retreat. We do write too little about the working class. But it is not as simple as it may seem to the uninitiated. I'm sure this encounter between workers and writers will do us a world of good. It is my considered opinion that such friendly encounters allowing us to share with the workers both our views on art and our reflections on how to produce a book of lasting value, politically mature and distinguished for its high artistic merits—such friendly encounters are extremely necessary. I have an idea that our initiative will be taken up and followed not only by our Rostov writers, but also by Muscovites, Leningraders, and perhaps writers everywhere in the country. I do not want to sound too self-confident, but I think this is a good thing we have started, and good books will appear as a result of our mutual desire and our creative

co-operation with the working class. Our general unity of people, whether working in the arts or in industry, our political unity, and our moral and spiritual unity, will guarantee this. And so, I must ask you to assure the workers of the Kirov Plant that such books will really be written.

Of all the presents which my guests the Kirovites have given me the most precious, of course, is the title of Communist shock worker and the pass to the Kirov Plant. But I want you to bear in mind that Kirovites are a rather canny lot, and there's more to this gift of a pass than meets the eye. I can practically read their thoughts: you're welcome any time, any day, to come to our plant and get to know us and our work better, and naturally you'll find it all so fascinating that you'll want to sit down and write about it. My dear comrades, I never pledged myself to the agricultural or war themes exclusively! I haven't forgotten the good old days, and I might still be up to writing on other themes.

Well then, let us wish our dear guests a happy journey and assure them that they will always find a hearty welcome here in Veshenskaya and, for that matter, everywhere in the Don country.

1964

OPENING SPEECH AT THE SECOND CONGRESS OF WRITERS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Comrades,

I have been entrusted with the very honourable and responsible task of opening the Second Congress of Russia's Writers.

It makes me happy, and at the same time slightly nervous, to perform this duty, knowing that the attention of millions of people in the Soviet Union and abroad is focused on this meeting of writers representing our great Russian literature and the many wonderful literatures that are developing on Russia's vast territory.

I am convinced that the work of our congress will not go unnoticed for world public opinion and, particularly, the press. We must, of course, be prepared and realise that not just our friends, who sincerely rejoice in our successes and sympathise with our reverses, will respond to this event, but also our foes,

who will most certainly want to comment on our work. I have in mind those gentlemen who simply adore gossiping about our affairs.

Oh well, never mind them. We have no end of questions which we must discuss frankly and in a businesslike manner at this congress. I am saying this to forestall what our people, our millions of readers, might think: what on earth for did the writers all leave their desks to hold a meeting when they have other things to do, and we have far too many meetings as it is?

The opinion of the people is what we, writers, must value above all else. What else can justify the life and effort of each one of us if not the trust we earn from the people and a recognition of the fact that we give our all to the Party and our country?

I believe this is where we must look for the key to the problem of the artistic intelligentsia in the life of our society, if such a problem does exist at all.... Frankly, I sometimes think we're making too much of this problem. It's very nice, of course, to be treated with care, helped along and heartened with kind words, but isn't every one of us, Soviet intellectuals, reared by the Party and the people, obliged in his turn to treat with great care and filial love everything that has been gained in the difficult, half-a-century-long struggle by our people, our Party, and our own Soviet power?

If my own private opinion were asked, I'd say that the problem of the intelligentsia is solved very simply in our country: just be a loyal soldier of Lenin's Party, and whether you are a Communist or a non-Party man give all of yourself, give all your strength and your soul to the people, share in the people's life with its joys and difficulties, and there's the end of the "problem".

We shall have to spend a few days together here, in Moscow. We shall have to do a job of work together, and we'll have to work hard, too. And so as to get the most out of these few days for the benefit of Soviet literature, let us agree beforehand that we shall work with goodwill, as brother soldiers should, and try to forget all petty hurts and misunderstandings. Let us keep uppermost in our minds the thought which unites all of us—our concern for the further advancement of our great Soviet literature. The Party and the whole country are expecting this of us.

I am sure you will understand what I mean: I am not asking you to fall on each other's neck and forgive all wrongs. Friend-

liness is all very well, but in our literary, our ideological business there are principles a deviation from which must not be forgiven even to your dearest friend. Our unity will be really solid only when we cease to overlook each other's mistakes and learn to call a spade a spade. If there is still something which interferes with our normal work and the normal development of literature, let us ruthlessly sweep this something out of our path. If there are still people among us who like to flirt with their liberalism occasionally and play at give-away in the ideological struggle, let us tell them straight to their faces what we think of them.

We have no right to evade a straight-from-the-shoulder talk, as our responsibility is too big for this, and the cause entrusted to us is too important.

Naturally, every one of us has his sore problems, and each of the speakers will certainly want to touch upon them and tell the meeting about the affairs and cares of his own literary organisation. But allow me to stress this point particularly—the most important thing is not to lose sight of the main orientation, our main theme: literature and the life of the people, literature and the construction of communism. If you and I manage to hold that high note the song will be well sung, and our congress will proceed not just as a current literary affair but as a fruitful gathering of people who ponder seriously on life and on our art.

People abroad often ask us—some of them with malice and others with a genuine desire to understand—just what is socialist realism? I shall not venture to try and rob the theorists of their bread and, besides, scientific formulations are not my strong point. But what I usually say in reply is this: socialist realism is a method of depicting the truth of life, the truth as understood and interpreted by the artist from positions of Leninist partisanship. To put it even more plainly, I think it's a method which actively helps people to build up a new world.

Anyone who honestly wants to understand what is socialist realism should make a close study of the vast store of experience accumulated by Soviet literature in the fifty years of its existence. The history of this literature is, in fact, socialist realism embodied in the tangible images of its heroes and in the visual pictures of the people's endeavour.

Let the glorious road traversed by Soviet literature and, particularly, Russian literature which is one of its main detachments, pass before our mind's eye today as we discuss the future. The wealth we have amassed is enormous. We have

something to be proud of and to oppose to loud but barren abstractionism. And though we can see how much more we still have to do to justify the trust of the people, and though we may still be dissatisfied with our work, we must never forget the contribution made by our literature to the treasure-store of mankind's spiritual values, nor the unquestionable authority it enjoys everywhere in the world.

Dear comrades!

The writers of the Russian Federation are the first in the USSR to hold a congress of their own. Other such congresses on a republican level are bound to follow. It would be fine if we, Russians, were to make this a serious, businesslike discussion. I trust that we shall make it so.

On this hopeful note, allow me to announce that the Second Congress of Writers of the Russian Federation is open.

1965

A WORD OF THANKS

Despite my strong resistance to flattery, I am simply overcome and these three days have made me feel ten years older. So this might just as well have been my seventieth and not my sixtieth birthday....

But talking seriously, I should like to thank all those present in the hall who have done me the honour of attending my birthday gathering, and all my many readers who are not here.

I should like to thank everybody who helped me with the warmth of their hearts along this longish sixty-year road. I want to express my deep gratitude to our Soviet Government for the high award I have received.

Thank you all!

1965

TO THE SWEDISH ROYAL ACADEMY

I sincerely thank you for the high assessment of my literary effort and the award of the Nobel Prize. I gratefully accept your kind invitation to Stockholm for Nobel Prize celebration.

1965

TO *PRAVDA*

I sincerely thank all my Soviet and foreign reader friends, and all the organisations and individuals who have congratulated me on winning the Nobel Prize.

1965

AN INTERVIEW GIVEN TO A *PRAVDA* CORRESPONDENT

How do you feel about winning the Nobel Prize?

I am naturally pleased that I have been awarded the Nobel Prize, but I beg you to understand my feelings correctly: what I feel is not the self-satisfaction of an individual, a professional writer whose work has earned this high international recognition. Predominant in my feelings is my glad awareness that I have done something, even if very little, to add more glory to my country, the Party in whose ranks I have been for a good half of my life, and, of course, our Soviet literature. This is more important to me than all my personal emotions.

There is also the gratification of knowing that the novel genre, the very legitimacy of whose existence in the modern world has been questioned by certain literary figures, can be said to have been vindicated. A well-written book lives a long life, and no living thing can be disavowed without good reason.

How did you learn the news?

From a telegram sent me by Swedish journalists. But the news was late in reaching me: the telegram was delivered to me by Comrade Mendaliyev, secretary of the Furmanov district Party Committee, who ran me down to earth 140 kilometres away from the district centre. In order to cable my acknowledgment to the Swedish Royal Academy I had to fly to Uralsk in rather inauspicious weather. But altogether October 15 was a very lucky day for me: I got up at daybreak and made headway with that chapter from the first part of my novel which somehow I just could not get right. (This is the chapter where Nikolai Streltsov receives a visit from his brother, a general

whose image I modelled on the personality of General Lukin.) Late in the afternoon I learnt about the Nobel Prize, and in the evening I got two magnificent grey geese with two shots (the only two I fired). And, what is more, I got them at the farthest range, which doesn't often happen, you know.

And how has the prize affected the present routine of your life?

You must know by now that it's not so easy to knock me out of the saddle. As usual, I work, rest, drink lovely Kazakh kumiss, and sometimes when I go duck-shooting and get chilled to the marrow I allow myself a glass of Kazakh *arakà*. After Stockholm, I shall finish the first part of *They Fought for Their Country*. I firmly believe I shall. So everything's in order!

The Kazakh steppe may look desolate, but here, as everywhere else in the country, life is seething busily: the last hectares of land for autumn ploughing—over and above plan—are being upturned, the shepherds are getting ready for a difficult winter, farm-machine operators—the region's best—get together to exchange experience, and so, here too, people work to the best of their ability, inspired by the Party's concern for the economic and cultural development of the country. It makes me happy to feel myself a tiny particle of this powerful collective of people building communism.

October 21, 1965

THE VITAL STRENGTH OF REALISM

On this momentous occasion I consider it my pleasant duty to thank the Swedish Royal Academy once again for awarding me the Nobel Prize.

I have already had occasion to publicly state that the honour gave me a feeling of gratification not only because it is an international recognition of my professional merits or qualities peculiar to me as a writer. I am proud that this prize has been awarded to a Russian, a Soviet writer. There are many writers in my country, and I am representing them here.

As I have already said, I am also gratified because this award is another, albeit indirect, affirmation of the genre of

novel. Lately I have often had to read and hear assertions, which frankly puzzled me, that the form of novel was obsolete and no longer able to meet modern requirements. And yet it is, in fact, the novel which allows the author to present the most comprehensive picture of the world of reality and project upon it his own attitude to this reality and its urgent problems, and also the attitude of like-minded people.

The novel more than any other genre predisposes the author to probe the vastness of the life surrounding us, rather than attempt to present his own small self as the centre of the universe. By its very nature, this genre offers the realist writer the widest scope of action.

Many modern trends in art reject realism because it has allegedly outlived its time. I declare, without fear of being accused of conservatism, that I uphold quite contrary views and am a convinced champion of realist art.

There is a lot of talk about avantgarde literature, and what people have in mind is experimentation mainly in the sphere of form. In my opinion, the true avantgarde in literature are the writers who in their books reveal the new features, relations and attitudes specific to life in our age.

Realism as such and the realist novel rest on the experience of the great masters of the past. But in the course of development it has acquired essentially new and distinctly modern features.

I am speaking of realism which carries the idea of renovating life and reorganising it for the benefit of man. I am speaking, of course, of what we call socialist realism. It is unique in that it expresses a world outlook that will not admit of either contemplativeness or an escape from reality but, on the contrary, calls men to the struggle for progress, helps them to appreciate the aims supported by millions of people, and lights for them the paths of this struggle.

Mankind is not broken up into a host of individuals moving in a state of weightlessness, like cosmonauts when they have gone beyond the limit of terrestrial gravitation. We live on earth, we obey terrestrial laws. Huge strata of the earth's population have common interests and aspire for the same goals, and the pursuit of these goals unites rather than disunites them.

These strata are working people who create everything with their hands and their brain. I belong to those writers who regard it as the highest privilege and the highest freedom to be able to serve unreservedly the working people.

Everything stems from here. Herefrom it can be concluded how I, a Soviet writer, picture the place of an artist in the modern world.

We live in a troubled age. But there is no nation in the world that wants war. There are forces that hurl whole nations into the flames of war. Can the heart of a writer remain deaf to the outcry of the smouldering ruins to which vast territories were reduced in the Second World War? Can an honest writer not speak up against those who would like to doom mankind to self-destruction?

What then is the mission of a writer who considers himself not a sort of deity, raised to Olympian heights above the combat of the colliding forces and remaining impartial to human sufferings, but a son of his people, a tiny particle of mankind?

His mission is to be honest with the reader, to tell people the truth, perhaps the hard truth but always the brave truth. To strengthen in people's hearts their faith in the future and in their ability to build this future. To fight for peace in the world and encourage such fighters everywhere, wherever his words can reach. To unite people in their natural and honourable striving for progress.

Art has the power to influence the minds and hearts of men. I think that the right to be called an artist belongs to those writers who use this influence to benefit mankind and to create a world of beauty in the souls of men.

My own nation did not follow a trodden path in its historical advance. Ours were the paths of trail-blazers, of pioneers. My task as a writer, as I have always seen it, is to pay a tribute of esteem with all that I have written and will yet write to my own Soviet people—hard-working, creative, heroic people who have never attacked anyone, but have always been able to defend all that they have created, to defend their freedom and honour, and the right to build themselves the future of their own choosing.

I should like my books to help people to become better and purer in heart, I should like my books to evoke in them a love for their fellow men and a desire to fight for the ideals of humanism and progress. If I have achieved even a measure of this, I am happy.

I thank everyone present, and all the people who have sent me their congratulations on the Nobel Prize.

1965

NEW YEAR WISHES

Last year is past. And all of us, Soviet people, are already thinking of what we must do this coming year.

We have our big common plans and hopes. And each one of us has his list of New Year wishes.

May all of them come true! I wish my dear countrymen much success in their work and real happiness. I wish my brother writers and everyone engaged in the arts to produce works that will help our Party in the difficult and noble task of educating the new man.

I wish all the people on earth, our contemporaries living in the different countries, peace in the world and advancement in progress and democracy.

And the best thing I can wish myself is to finish the first part of my novel *They Fought for Their Country* as I promised to my readers. Finishing this part will be only half the battle. There's the second part to write.

I hope to communicate with the readers of *Pravda* soon through this newspaper.

January 1, 1966

SPEECH IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE DIPLOMA OF HONORARY DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY CONFERRED BY THE KARL MARX UNIVERSITY IN LEIPZIG

Dear Comrade Brüning,
Dear Comrade Höckselschneider,

May I beg you to convey my heartfelt thanks to the Academic Council of the Philology Department of Leipzig University.

I have to say that I feel differently about an honorary academic degree conferred upon me by a bourgeois country and a similar degree coming from a fraternal socialist state. In the former case it is simply a testimonial of my literary skill and my attainments in the sphere of literature. In the latter case it is quite a different matter: the academic degree is conferred upon me by people who hold the same political views as I do and who strive towards the same goals and for the

same ideals as our Soviet people. Their recognition is immeasurably more precious to me.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to ask you, Comrade Brüning and Comrade Höckselschneider, to convey my thanks and my cordial greetings to the faculty and students of Leipzig University.

I should also like to say, once again availing myself of the opportunity, that the very next time I am in the German Democratic Republic I shall deem it an honour and a pleasant duty to pay a visit to your university.

Allow me to thank you personally for undertaking this long voyage from Leipzig to Veshenskaya. It is quite a feat because the trip is not a light one.

Comrade Schlemm, may I thank you, too, as a representative of the working people of democratic Germany.

I thank all of you who have honoured me with their presence here on this great day in my life.

January 10, 1966

SPEECH AT THE 23RD PARTY CONGRESS

Comrades,

Just as one cannot judge of the enchanting beauty of the Volga's majestic flow from its different tributaries, imbued though they are with Russian charm and a loveliness all their own, one cannot form a complete picture of the scale of construction and our country's breathtaking achievements from disjointed newspaper reports on our workdays and our separate accomplishments.

But when we gather for a congress of our Party, listen to the main report and take in the figures summing up what has been done by the Party and people in the years under review, we really see the results of the titanic endeavour, and really feel the greatness of what the people are creating in the name of their future.

If, after this lyrical introduction, I were to change abruptly to prose, I would declare in all honesty that I envy the people who can tell the congress from this high rostrum about the successes they have scored in one or another field of industry, science or education. I am speaking here as a representative of Soviet literature, and I have to admit with bitterness that our

successes are not as big as we ourselves and you, our readers, would want them to be.

There is a joke about the secretary of the writers' organisation in Tula who replied very cheerfully when asked how matters stood with them: "We're doing fine! Whereas in the old days there was just one writer in Tula Gubernia—Lev Tolstoi—today we can boast of twenty-three members in the Tula branch of the Writers' Union."

I am not as optimistic as he is. Our numbers are growing, it is true, but as the co-operators say: "The produce does not always quite meet the desired standards."

To be sure some good books were brought out during these last few years, both books of prose and books of poetry, but not nearly enough. This is proved with sufficient conclusiveness by the list of books nominated for the Lenin Prize. With the exception of two or three, these books would hardly pass muster even at the preliminary discussion. This is not a stalemate. Writers are working hard. But outstanding books are not an annual occurrence, and it would not be right to expect them to appear very often. Take a blessed region like Krasnodar, and even there bad years and crop failures are known. So what can you expect from literature?

If you take war literature, for instance, its slow progress must be put down, in my opinion, to the complexity of the theme itself. War memoirs have only begun to appear in any large number in the last few years, and many of our esteemed commanders and military personalities have not yet had their say, though one's own recollections are much easier to write than a big novel. Please do not think that I'm making excuses for myself: after all, I'm not the only one who's writing about the war, and many others will write about it after us, too. I'm simply stating a fact.

I do not want to bore you with a detailed analysis of our literary affairs, and anyway it is more than one person could undertake. We are to go into the matter thoroughly at our writers' congress which will take place later this year.

A few words about what is customarily called the place of the writer in the life of society. What are the phenomena characteristic of the life of our contemporary society, and what stand must the writer adopt in relation to these phenomena?

I am sure it is obvious to every unbiased person that the developments in the world today make it impossible for an honest writer or artist to assume the stand of an impartial

observer. It's a simple truth, one might think, yet occasionally it has to be recalled to people's minds. The course of events in the life of contemporary mankind is anything but smooth. Reactionary bourgeois art does everything to fan in people their most brutish passions, much like the forces of evil described in the ancient tales and legends of all nations and countries which would change man into his antipode, deprived of a human image and a human soul. They are different symptoms, but they are all indicative of phenomena belonging to the same category.

Our country and other socialist countries have come to symbolise a bulwark of hope, of faith in the bright and just future for millions of working people of different nationalities, different political views, and different races. Everything that we are building, everything that our workers, farmers, scientists and artists are working on, everything which our Party inspires us to create is undertaken for peace in the world, for the triumph of free endeavour, in the name of the ideals of democracy, socialism, the brotherly friendship and co-operation of peoples. For man. For the humankind.

And the question asked by Gorky: "Whose side are you on, master-craftsmen of culture?" sounds as urgent today as it did 30 years ago. The overwhelming majority of Soviet authors and progressive writers in other countries give a clear-cut answer to this question in their books.

I have had occasion more than once to discuss the writer's role in the life of society with writers, journalists, and newspaper correspondents at big, representative gatherings. In particular, this subject formed a significant part of my speech in Stockholm Town Hall during the Nobel prize-giving ceremony last year. The audience was essentially different from the present one. And so the form in which I clothed my thoughts was correspondingly different. The form, mind you, but not the content.

Wherever and in whatever language Communists speak, we always speak as Communists. There are some who may not like it, but they just have to lump it. Moreover, it is this very quality that is respected everywhere. Wherever a Soviet person makes a public speech he must speak as a Soviet patriot. In defining the role of the writer in the life of society we speak as Communists, as sons of our great Motherland, as citizens of a country which is building a communist society, as spokesmen for our Party's and our people's revolutionary-humanist views.

It is a very different matter when an author writes one thing in the Soviet Union and publishes something else abroad. He uses the same Russian language in both cases, but in the first for better camouflage, and in the second for desecrating this language with his rabid hatred and malice against everything Soviet, against everything that is precious and sacred to us.

I belong to those writers who are proud to be a tiny particle of the great and noble Soviet people. We are proud to be the sons of our beautiful and mighty country. Our country has created us and given us everything it could give. We owe everything to our country. Our Soviet homeland is indeed a mother to us. We are all members of one large family. So what can our reaction be to the behaviour of traitors who attempt to defile that which is most sacred to us? There's a black sheep in every flock, says the old proverb. But there is black and black, and I am sure that everyone will agree that there is nothing more blasphemous and vile than slandering one's own mother, insulting her maliciously, and raising one's hand to strike her!

It's not the writers who have slandered our country and flung mud at what is very precious to us that I feel shame for. They are amoral. But I do feel shame for people who are trying to defend these writers, no matter what prompts them to do so.

And I feel doubly ashamed of people who are offering their services and applying for permission to go bail for these convicted apostates.

We paid too dearly for all that we have gained, we treasure our Soviet power too much to let anyone slander it with immunity.

There are some who, invoking humanism, bewail the sternness of the verdict. I see here a group of delegates from the Party organisation of our Soviet Army, and I wonder what they would do if traitors were discovered in one of their units? Our soldiers know better than anyone else that humanism and slobbery are different things altogether.

There's something else I'm thinking of. Had this happened in the memorable 1920s when cases were tried more by revolutionary justice than the strictly demarcated clauses of the Criminal Code, a very different, oh so very different punishment would have been meted out to these turncoats! And here, if you please, people are talking about the "sternness" of the verdict!

I should also like to say to the bourgeois defenders of the slanderers: do not worry about the safety of criticism in our country. We are supporting and developing criticism. And much sharp criticism has been voiced at the present congress too. However, slander is not criticism, and mud from a puddle is not paint from an artist's palette.

Comrades, I have tried your attention long enough with questions concerning literature. I do not want you to think that literary affairs are the beginning and end of all things for us writers. We have many other interests besides. For instance, author Leonid Leonov has devoted many years of his life to the struggle for the preservation of forests—the beauty and wealth of the Russian countryside. Other problems also engage our minds, and what I'm going to speak about now has nothing to do with literature. Let us solve the problem of Lake Baikal. And allow me to say a few words about our planning.

On March 5th, *Pravda* published an article by V. Titov entitled "Administrative Lyricists". Briefly, this is what the article was about: once upon a time the Ministry of the Food Industry of the RSFSR decided to build a vegetable-drying factory in Kalyazin. The factory was, in fact, built, but it turned out that it could not be supplied to capacity with raw material. So it was decided to convert it into a factory manufacturing soya sauces. The job done, it was discovered that the Moscow and Serpukhov factories were supplying the inhabitants of Moscow and Moscow Region with all the soya sauce they could use. Expensive imported plant was then bought to make the thing into a milk factory, but before the plant had been quite installed it was decided that a poultry packing plant would be better. A large loan was granted by the bank. But once again it transpired that the capacity of this plant exceeded many times over the availability of raw material. The factory has existed for ten years, and close on a million rubles have been expended on the various reconversions. The magnitude of this fact is not so very large, perhaps, but one feels it permissible to ask: what sort of planning is this?

In Volgograd last year, waste waters that had not been purified were allowed to slip into the Volga from a certain factory, either through negligence or maybe through carelessness in the planning of the protective installations. Dead fish dotted the river to a distance of four hundred kilometres from the place where the water was polluted. The loss recorded by the control posts totals: 842,000 sturgeon (and varieties of

sturgeon), 735,000 scale fish, and an unaccountable quantity of small fry, larva and roe. The damage to our national economy is roughly estimated at eleven million rubles. And considering that a good half of the sturgeon go down to the bottom when dead and do not float on the surface, the damage can be doubled at the very least.

Let us come back to Lake Baikal. A great deal has been said and written about it. But serious warnings in the press are not always heeded, and what if the same thing happens on the Baikal as has just happened on the Volga? Maybe we should try and find the courage to give up the idea of chopping down the forests around Lake Baikal and building pulp and paper mills there, and instead build the kind of factories that would not threaten the very existence of this treasure-house of Russian nature? In any case, all the necessary measures must be taken to save the Baikal. I am afraid that posterity will not forgive us if we fail to keep safe Russia's "Glorious Sea, the Sacred Baikal!"

I also have a personal problem to put before you, comrades. The Quiet Don is going to ruin. According to specialists, up to seven million cubic metres of waste waters are discharged into it every year by the industrial enterprises. A very real threat hangs over the Azov basin—its reserves of fish will be completely depleted within the next few years. Whereas in the old days the catch of valuable fish alone exceeded 150,000 tons a year, nowadays it hardly reaches 15,000 tons, or in other words one-tenth.

The discharge of industrial waste, the regulation of the Don waters by the Tsimlyanskaya dam, and on top of that the not very far-sighted management of Comrade Ishkov, the Minister of the Fishing Industry of the USSR, have already brought the Azov basin to the brink of catastrophe. After a long silence with which Comrade Ishkov met the lawful attacks of *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda,* he responded at last with an unconvincing article entitled "The Sea of Azov Today and Tomorrow". The Sea of Azov cannot have any "tomorrow" if Comrade Ishkov continues to manage it the way he does today. It is with his permission that close on two hundred ships are busy catching bullheads and sardelles all the year round except for two months in summer. It is on his instructions that mechanised dredgers alone destroy more than ten million pike perch small fry in a year, thereby bringing to nought the efforts of all the spawning and fish-breeding enterprises in the Azov basin.

Referring to the conference of fishing and research organisations for confirmation, Comrade Ishkov asserts that even now no less than forty or fifty thousand tons of sardelles may be caught every year. What he makes no mention of is that the small fry of valuable fish are caught together with the sardelles.

I'll confess that my intention yesterday was to give it to Comrade Ishkov straight from the shoulder, but in the evening I met some frontline friends, my good old comrades, and the devil prompted me to show them the speech I had prepared. They accused me of rudeness, saying that Comrade Ishkov was not a bad sort and not a bad worker, and made me promise that I'd water down my speech. What won't one do for one's frontline friends! I wanted to criticise the sturgeon—that is, the Minister. And where's the point in criticising the sardelle—a Rostov or other fishing board? Oh well, a promise is a promise, and so I'll say no more. So all I shall wish to Comrade Ishkov is: "Let him live and graze on sardelles!"

I also have to say that the contribution made by our ichthyologists is very insignificant and falls far short of the requirements of our national economy. In countries like Japan, Rumania, and elsewhere, the catch per hectare of pond exceeds ours several times over. The comparison, as you can see, is not in our favour, and thought should be given to this by those whose job it is to do the thinking in this particular branch of economy. They have to think fast because with the present speedy depletion of our rivers, the problem of pond fishing will confront us in all its urgency before very long.

In my speech, I devoted as much attention to the fishing business as I did to literature. Do you imagine there's nothing more to it than meets the eye? Of course not. I want us to have an abundance of fish—sea-roach, vimba-vimba, and herring —not sea kale. Let those who like the taste of sea kale eat it. As for me, I am all for preserving fish because it contains plenty of phosphorus which, it is asserted, is good for the brain and makes it work more intensively. And, after all, it's not just the writers who have need of this brain thing!

Just a few more words about planning, if you will permit me. I'll cite one example to prove my point. By and large I'm all for planning, but I'm for abundance, too. The collective farms and state farms of Rostov region are two thousand tractors short of their requirements. The kind of planning I'm all for is where the Minister of Agriculture Comrade Matskevich would himself offer these tractors to the farms so we wouldn't

have to despatch our regional officials to Moscow to procure them by fair means or foul. What happens now? Watching these people go to Moscow to procure this and that, I too start on my way. My scale is more modest, naturally: I want to get a new school started, or again I want to get some roofing slate or timber for the collective farm. Well then, I come to the Minister and say: "Comrade Minister, please let us have three thousand pieces of slate to roof the collective farm cowsheds." And the Minister replies: "But ours is a planned economy, you must understand! You've already received everything you're due under the plan." And I say to him: "I do understand, but the cows, and even less so the calves, will hardly understand why they must soak in the autumn rain and freeze in the winter." Roofs are covered with slate not because it's showy or pretty, but simply because it's economical. Besides, if the cowsheds are roofed with straw there'll be no incentive for the farmers to store up plenty of fodder: in case they run short they can always feed the roof to the cows, but if it's a slate roof it stays put.

And as you go begging perpetually you begin to notice unpleasant changes in your character and even in your figure. What has happened to the author's proud carriage and the old soldier's smart bearing? You begin to notice that your back is bent in supplication, and that you no longer address the Minister as "Comrade Minister" in the formal manner, but ingratiatingly as "Dear Ivan Ivanovich". Little by little the corrections to our planning which life itself compels you to make cultivate in you certain rapacious tendencies. Even here, at this congress, as you stroll up and down the foyer during recess you watch hawk-eyed for a Minister or someone, thinking feverishly in the meantime: "What can I get through him?" And when you ring up the Minister asking him to grant you an audience you never say you're a deputy to the Supreme Soviet, you say you're a writer. Ministers are more responsive to writers. In short, you wangle any way you can. And so, as you see, the writers' life is not all beer and skittles.

I must beg your indulgence for the smile I permitted myself speaking from this high rostrum. Speaking seriously we all believe firmly in the great wisdom of our Party and in the accomplishment of all the tasks which the Party calls us to accomplish.

And you may rest assured, dear comrade delegates, that the many-thousand-strong army of writers, genuinely devoted to the country and the people, fully subscribe to the views on art

and literature expressed in the report of our Central Committee, and wholeheartedly support the policy of our Leninist Party.

1966

From the letter
A HUMANIST IS THE MAN WHO FIGHTS

Dear friends and brother writers,

First of all, I want to wish this meeting success in the noble cause for which we have gathered here.

My heartfelt greetings to our guests, our colleagues from other countries who have accepted our invitation and made the long and arduous journey here to attend and take part in this meeting.

This is not an ordinary gathering of writers where purely literary matters are discussed. What we are going to talk about here is the mission of the writer, the purpose of our work, and the writer's responsibility to mankind.

In form, the literary profession is one of the most individualistic professions in the world. It requires the writer to spend long hours at his desk in ascetic solitude. And I don't know if there's anything more disastrous for a writer than having a resemblance to another writer. It is a profession carrying the greatest burden of civic responsibility. And in this respect none of the real artists differ from one another. Each one of us writes with the hope that his word will reach as many people as wish to hear it. Happiness comes to us when we succeed in expressing not the tiny world of our own "self" but something which stirs the hearts and minds of millions of people.

Events occur in the world and days come to pass which make it imperative for us to get together in order to jointly settle our urgent problems and find the answers to questions concerning the innermost essence of our endeavour, the writer's conscience, the conscience of humanists.

The question is what stand the writer must adopt when the matter concerns the struggle and sufferings of a whole nation?

Humanism, love of man, of mankind.... How differently different people tend to interpret this concept depending on what forces of human society they represent!

In accordance with our communist convictions we, Soviet writers, hold that when a murderer or a robber has raised

his hand to strike down his victim, a true humanist will fight to avert the hand of the murderer and render his evil will harmless, and not merely pity the poor victim and lament the fact that murder does exist in the world.

How much greater then is the measure of the humanist's responsibility and duty when barbarous murders and plunder are perpetrated by the imperialists of a big, strong country whose victims are the proud and courageous people of a small country, valiantly fighting for their independence.

The artist's eternal theme is the struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. In our times this struggle has a distinct class meaning.

It is the inviolable, sacred right of every nation to defend its independence and honour, and to build up its life and its future as it sees fit. Soviet people know from cruel experience what it means to fight a war against a blood-crazed enemy who would stop at nothing to deprive us of freedom and life itself. We always side with people who are struggling for their national liberation against imperialist oppressors.

The writers who have gathered at this round table today are faced with the need to make clear-cut conclusions for themselves. Soviet writers have made their choice long ago. I think that our motives will be appreciated by our guests, representatives of their respective literatures. Our fraternal Vietnamese people and the national liberation movement in the whole world need active help and support.

And does it not seem to you that the happenings which cause anxiety to the peoples of the world today bear a resemblance to what happened thirty years ago when fascism began to test its strength in Spain as a prelude to a world armed conflict? Everybody knows the saying: "It's not the gods who bake the pots". I think it would not have harmed mankind any if in those days long past the gods had condescended to practise the trade of making and baking pots. But it's quite another matter when today's political pot-makers, fancying themselves gods, begin to impose their "new order" everywhere by force of arms. This ought to put us on our guard, us writers in the first place. This cannot but evoke a feeling of righteous indignation and anger in a thinking person. Let us never forget the words of the late Julius Fučik: "People, be on your guard!" And in the case of writers one might say: the time has come to act!

Our strength, the writers' strength, lies in the passion of our words that take hold of people's hearts and minds, stimulate their energy, strengthen their will, and rouse them to struggle

for Man, for humanity, for the light of freedom and brotherhood, against the darkness of imperialistic barbarity.

That is why we, Soviet writers, voicing our opinion of the events which are taking place in the world, appeal to the writers of Asia and Africa, to writers in all countries and continents, for solidarity, for unity. It is our duty as writers, our duty as humanists, our duty as internationalists.

Every step forward brings the goal nearer. Let today's meeting be one such step.

1966

PREFACE TO THE BOOK *HISTORY OF THE KIROV PLANT*

The enormously important task of compiling the history of the Kirov Plant has been successfully completed.

No novel could have encompassed the entire and very complicated process of the plant's birth, establishment, and long years of development, a process involving the life of several generations of workers, engineers and technicians.

But a history and a novel are mutually complementary rather than mutually exclusive genres, and so if novels and stories are written about the Kirov workers, with the plots based on their heroic and dramatic experiences, these books by fiction writers and the present work of historians will go through life hand in hand.

As one reads the history of this plant one finds oneself thinking that this book will be of inestimable value to the coming generations (and not only generations of Kirov workers) as a true account of how the heroic working class of St. Petersburg—Petrograd—Leningrad suffered, struggled, won victories, and triumphed!

1966

SPEECH MADE AT THE POLISH EMBASSY IN MOSCOW

Comrade Ambassador,

I am highly gratified to have been awarded the Złaty Kłos Prize. It is doubly precious to me because I am receiving it

from the readers of a country which has given the world many great men in literature, art and science. I am very grateful to all the sponsors of the contest, and should like to ask you to convey my heartfelt thanks to my Polish readers.

1967

A TELEGRAM TO THE INTERNATIONAL LITERARY SYMPOSIUM

Dear colleagues,

The wisdom of antiquity and the problems of today engage the thoughts and feelings of everyone who is mentally with you, the participants of the international literary symposium which has met here, in Tashkent.

This is a jubilee symposium. Ten years ago, the first conference of writers from countries of Asia and Africa met here in Tashkent, and the foundation was laid for a fruitful cooperation of writers, organised within the framework of writers' associations, in the noble pursuit of securing peace in the world and the progress of mankind.

The problems confronting us today imperiously demand that each master of literature should answer the questions: Who is he with? Who and what does he serve with his pen, his work, his art? Our epoch demands that all of us should take an active part in tackling and solving its vital problems.

You will also have the good fortune of attending the Navoi celebrations in his birthplace. Many nations take pride in their great poets. But it is not so very often that dates like this 525th birth anniversary are celebrated. Navoi, a singer of human toil and charity, has bequeathed to the world the wisdom nurtured by his native people to live on for centuries and millenniums. Let this wisdom also light the way for you at the present symposium:

"And only he deserves the honourable name of Man whose thoughts are always with the people."

Navoi said this. Let us heed his words.

1968

SPEECH AT THE 24TH PARTY CONGRESS

Comrade delegates,

For us, Soviet writers and people engaged in the arts, these past five years proved to be years of rallying even closer to the banners of the Communist Party, of gaining an even clearer sense of responsibility for our political views, our aesthetic culture, and, most important of all, for the communist education of Soviet people—readers, spectators, listeners—all those to whom literature and the arts are addressed.

Our literature, we can proudly confirm, has from the first days of Soviet power faithfully and honestly served the people; and its voice, to quote our great Russian poet, truly

Rang like a tocsin for all men to hear,
On days of trouble and on days of cheer....

As in the past, its voice is heard far outside our country, and as before it rouses toiling mankind and appeals to the heart and mind of every working man to struggle for genuine progress, for peace, and for communism—the most reliable of hopes for all thinking people on our planet.

It may be said without any false modesty that we have made considerable headway in re-educating people by stimulating their moral and spiritual development through the medium of art. It is a generally recognised fact that no other literature carries as lofty an ideological message as ours. Could you name a country whose literature would rival ours in this respect? I can safely assert that there is no such country, and no such literature.

The militant role played by Soviet literature and art in the world process of cultural development is determined, first of all, by the charge of communist ideology and partisanship carried in the best works of our artists. It is this quality that evokes fury in our ideological foes and their accomplices—the revisionists. They should like to persuade us to depart from our clear-cut positions of convinced fighters for socialism and communism, and to renounce our fundamental principles of serving the interests of the Party and people.

Prominent among the would-be overthrowers of socialist realism is Fischer, former Austrian Communist. This reputed specialist on "absolute" and completely unrestricted freedom, anathematises our Soviet art with great fervour. He says that art in the USSR is shackled and "committed", and this makes

him very sad. He'd love to unshackle our art and free it from partisanship, from its noble duty of serving society.

Fischer man and other fishers abroad are casting their lines with rancid bait on the hooks in the hope of catching as many simple-hearted carp in the muddy waters of the so-called shoreless realism as they can.

We have rather a shortage of these trusting carp, and so the clever fishermen will have a most disappointing catch.

But in present-day conditions of extremely tense ideological struggle it is time we too went into determined attack and countered the efforts of the renegades and revisionists of all hues with our never failing weapon—the undimming Leninist truth! To do so is our immediate task.

What I said at the beginning of my speech was not said for the purpose of boosting the importance of what we, writers, have accomplished. If it was not for the Party which assembled us here for this congress there would be no accomplishments in literature, and for that matter there would be no Soviet literature as such.

Uniting together thousands of literary personalities, beginning with Gorky and ending with today's young writers, and placing their talent in the service of the people and the interests of the people, was a task that could have been achieved only by our Party and the noble ideas which guide it. It's really wonderful, comrades, when you really come to think of it!

I'll be honest with you, comrades. My almost epic and rather solemn introduction and the reference I made to my brother writers' past services was a ruse on my part to put you in a more charitable mood before I went on to the gains and shortcomings we had in the last five years. Because from what some people said in the debates it seemed to me that you felt quite belligerent towards us.

The Central Committee's report gave an exhaustive appraisal of the present state of affairs in literature and the arts. We subscribe to this appraisal without any reservations.

How do matters stand in our literary business? Let us not speak of those writers who deserve public scorn. One does not speak of people one despises, it's beneath one's dignity. Let us talk about writers who deserve our good attention, let us talk business. Sergei Narovchatov, Secretary of the Moscow writers' organisation, speaking at the recent city Party conference said that there are not very many snipers among us but then we have quite a few Voroshilov sharpshooters who make

the backbone of the organisation. Such was roughly the meaning of his very apt poetic comparison. But what Narovchatov did not say was that among the sharpshooters there is a fair number of people who never hit the target at all, let alone the bull's eye.

"The bullet's gone for milk," soldiers say about shots like these. And, indeed, strange things happen at the literary firing ground: the bullet which has missed the target comes back to the poor shot like a boomerang but does not hit him and actually brings him, if not milk quite literally, a fat author's fee for his kiddies' milk.

Things would not be half so bad if these poor shots fired less often and not in a running fire. Quite a lot of expensive cartridges are wasted, and sometimes the loss borne—by our readers in the first place—is quite substantial. But try getting a rotten shot like that to leave the firing ground! He will insist that he is on active literary service, he assures everyone that he is a promising shot and that next time he'll certainly hit the bull's eye. Not that he means it, because he's doing fine without ever hitting the target. At least he's doing as well as a cat that lives in a sausage shop.

What can be done about this? I think that the editors of publishing houses and magazines—the regional and central ones—should sharply raise the standards of their requirements. For who if not the editors of publishing houses and magazines should be the first to bar the way to an inferior book? Literary critics must forego the practice of keeping mum when it's a book that can't be praised: it is their duty to give an analysis and an appraisal of the book's true worth. The writers' organisations are also largely to blame for not holding back a useless book by the tails of its drab coat.

There is yet another side to this matter, and I mean the author's remuneration. For us, Soviet authors, writing has naturally never been and never could be a means of self-enrichment. It is a principle with us. In the West a writer receives a certain percentage of what his publishers collect from the sale of his book, and this system allows a celebrated or simply a fashionable author of best sellers to become a very wealthy person. And yet many progressive writers can hardly make ends meet. Obviously, this purely commercial system is absolutely unacceptable for us. Still, in our copyright there are also some points which are worth reflecting on. Paradoxical though it may sound, the author of a most widely read book—which with us means a book of the highest ideological and

artistic merits—receives less and less for every next edition, until finally the book is included in his collected works.

There are a number of other points that want looking into in the work of our Writers' Union, but I feel I should not take up too much of your time and therefore I shall not speak about them now. An All-Union congress of writers is to be held in June, and we gladly invite all the zealots of literature to attend. That's where we'll really beat all our literary rugs! And choke with the dust.

Our books come out in truly gigantic impressions. Still, the demand exceeds production. Even the public libraries are on a hunger ration. Only one in every five, if that, gets a copy of the more popular books. And then we must also reckon with the legitimate desire of a worker, a collective farmer or an intellectual to buy the books he'd like to re-read some day and have them at home. That's when you begin to sympathise with the comrades from the city or district Party committees who have to distribute books as though they were the most essential commodities. And all because we have not enough paper!

I remember how heartily Konstantin Ivanovich Galanshin supported fiction at the last congress. At the time he was the first secretary of the Perm regional committee, and he virtually made us a declaration of love! He is now the Minister of the Pulp and Paper Industry, and he does not say a word.

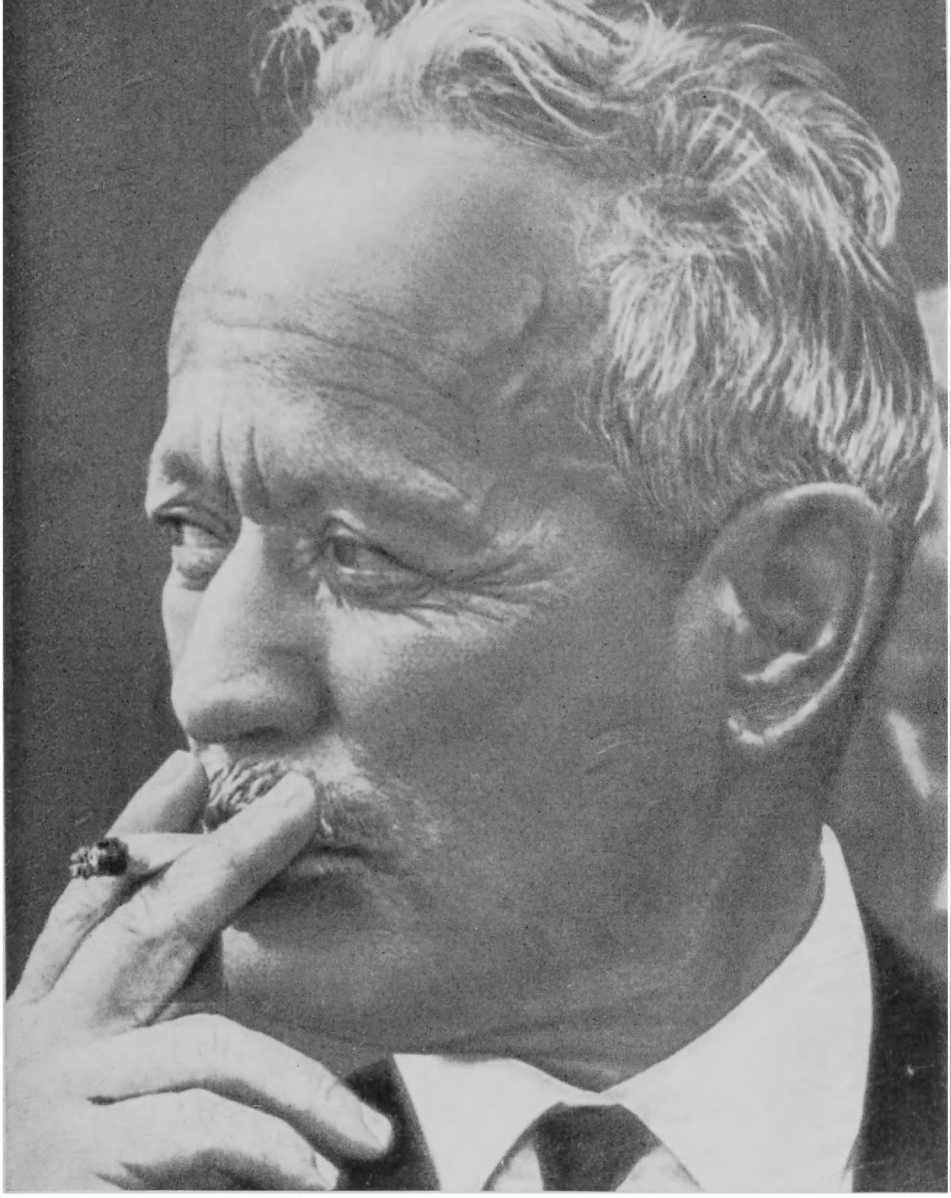
Dear Konstantin Ivanovich, we did believe in your love, and now we are accusing you of inconstancy. Look how the lady delegates pricked up their ears at the word "inconstancy"! Like all the women in the world they bristle at this word. I'll find loyal allies in them, I know. And anyway, what sort of love affair is this? A love affair, as everybody knows, means pretty speeches, and some sort of outlay, if not sacrifice. We do not expect any carnations or any sweet and manly smiles from you, Konstantin Ivanovich. Give us more paper! Paper! Paper above plan, which fortunately for us you are fulfilling, and of a better quality too. Give us paper and then we shall really believe that you love us. And then we, prose writers, will send a hat round and present you with a gorgeous bouquet wrapped in equally gorgeous wrapping paper, and perhaps a youthful poetess—stranger things happen!—will write a love madrigal in your honour. Imagine getting a love madrigal! Fascinating stuff, that. Even I wouldn't mind it in my old age, and as for you, dear Konstantin Ivanovich, you should really give yourself a chance.

You see, comrades, the lengths one has to go to for the sake of paper? Here I have appealed to love, pressed my hands to my heart, and promised things with such impossible gallantry.... But, joking apart, I have to say that even the paper we have is not put to rational use. Neither Comrade Galanshin nor we, writers, are to blame for this. It's squandered on anything and in any amount. Paper, as everyone knows, will endure whatever's written on it. Just think of it—almost half of the book titles published in the country last year were "departmental literature", as it is called. What is hiding behind this screen? Just anything. Plump office reports, memoranda of the same fantastic size, all manner of gift almanacs—albums devoted to one or another enterprise which immediately upon publication are deposited in the archives for the mice to nibble on. And everyone tries to give his particular volume a cloth binding, a shiny, colourful dust jacket, and simply must have it printed on glossy paper. This matter wants putting in order, comrade delegates, it has got very much out of hand. A stern approach must be taken to this business if it is to be set right, because the tendency to publish departmental literature is growing, and there is every cause for anxiety.

Before concluding this conversation, let us go back to its beginning. Comrade Narovchatov was right when he said that the main brunt of creating literature was borne by the people whom he called Voroshilov sharpshooters.

We have a gifted young generation growing up to replace us. The older writers are placing great hopes in this replacement. It can be safely said that a sound reinforcement is coming into literature. These young writers are needed by our society, and we are happy to entrust the future of our literature to them. They are interesting people whose thinking is patriotic and who have an urge to peer into the depths of life. The young are apt to be cocky and perhaps rather blunt in their opinions, but there is no indifference in them, they are continually seeking. To be sure, they lack experience, but that will come. The future of our literature belongs to these young writers, it is they who will build it and they who will be answerable for it. You understand, of course, that I am speaking of our youth as a whole, of our reinforcement, the fresh forces of Soviet literature, and I am not dividing them into the "clean" and the "unclean".

But I beg you to bear in mind that we, writers of the older generation, are still worth something too. As you know, writers just like all the other citizens of our great Soviet Union are on the military service register and since Comrades Grechko and



Photograph taken in 1966

A Japanese schoolgirl asks for an autograph

At the Nikko waterfall

A jaunt across the steppe

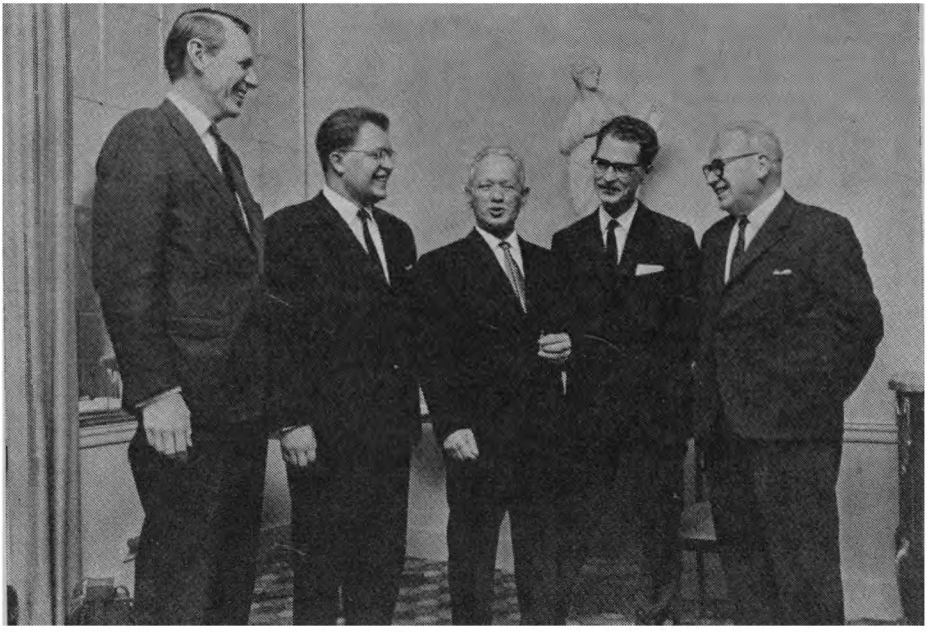
On the Don with Yuri Gagarin

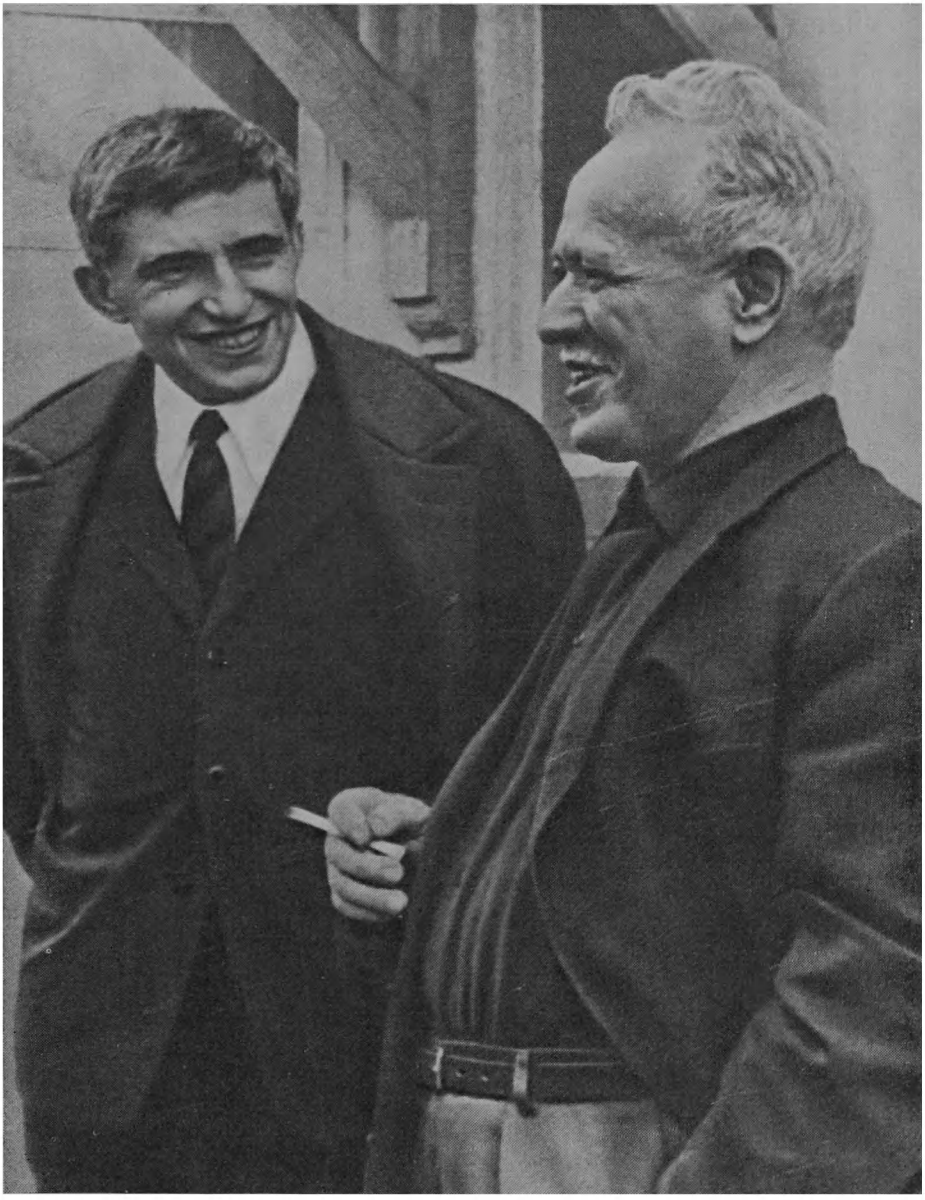
Sholokhov chats with his young colleagues

Young writers from different countries visit Veshenskaya at Sholokhov's invitation

Sholokhov and Yuri Gagarin among writers

Sholokhov meeting publishers





Sholokhov plays host to Ivan Popov, director of the Bulgarian Publishing House Narodna Mladezh

Rostov-on-the-Don. Meeting members of the Bulgarian-Soviet Club of Artistic Youth

Sholokhov receives a group of young writers who have taken part in the Fifth All-Union Conference.

Yepishev are not discharging us from the reserve, it means that they count on us still being useful, old soldiers who can be trusted in any exigency and under any circumstances. Isn't this sufficient proof, very flattering proof for us, that we are still needed not only in work but also in defence!

You will appreciate that I cannot use the language of figures and percentages when speaking of the new five-year plan. If you were to ask me how many big, middling and small books were expected to come out in the next five years, I would have to reply that even the whole secretariat of the Union of Soviet Writers would not be able to tell you this.

But, after all, what matters most is quality and not quantity. We firmly believe that in the coming five years we shall produce significant works of literature fully answering the higher artistic and ideological standards now set by our readers.

Our promise is guaranteed by our dedication to the cause of the Party and the people, and our sincere desire to serve the great ideas of communism with the whole of our strength and our abilities.

1971

Part III

Young People

From A SPEECH ABOUT MAXIM GORKY

...Gorky passionately loved people who fought for mankind's radiant future, and with all the strength of his fiery temperament hated exploiters, shopkeepers, and the petty bourgeois dozing in the quiet backwaters of provincial Russia....

I was always amazed by Gorky's tremendous store of knowledge on the most varied subjects, his indefatigable industriousness, and the stiff demands he made upon himself.

His books taught the Russian proletariat to fight against the tsarist government. When I was abroad I saw for myself how well the Western proletariat know and like Gorky, from whose immortal works they are learning to fight against capitalism.

Gorky, a man with an inflexible will and rare talent, had a hard struggle for admission to literature. In the days of tsarism, born talents from the people's masses were nipped in the bud because they had not the strength to fight their way through to the sources of knowledge. The old regime squashed all manifestations of talent coming from the people. In the Soviet Union conditions incomparable to anything ever known anywhere before have been created for the young people to attain the heights of culture....

1936

THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE THEATRE OF COLLECTIVE FARM COSSACK YOUTH IN VESHENSKAYA

In the first year of its existence the Veshenskaya Theatre of Collective Farm Cossack Youth has accomplished quite a lot. That year of study was certainly not wasted, as may be judged

from the latest productions. There's better co-ordination in the shows, and the acting is noticeably more mature. Still, this is little compared to what the theatre can achieve provided the actors and actresses do not get unduly conceited, imagining they have no farther to go, and do not contract the deadly disease of self-complacency. They have got to study harder than ever to perfect their skill, and make a long and arduous ascent before they can scale the real peaks of the art. I wish our collective farm Cossack youth, of whom we are rightfully proud, success in this undertaking.

1937

WE ARE WITH YOU WITH ALL OUR HEARTS

Dear Soviet boys and girls!

The Komsomol is celebrating its twentieth birthday, and it's an occasion I cannot miss. An old man, walking past a crowd of merrymaking young people, will pause for a minute and as he listens to the tune played on the accordion and gazes smilingly at the happy young faces he seems to feel years younger himself. It's the same with me. I, too, feel younger just thinking of you, my dear readers, and also a little sad because I am already thirty-three and will look like a pretty old bird at your wonderful holiday. My only consolation is that there will be others of my age and people even much older at your birthday party, a big occasion celebrated throughout our amazingly young and beautiful country. There will be veteran Komsomol members—now bearded men with large families—and they will recall their young Civil War days when, inspired by the justice of the cause they were defending, they routed the White generals, the kulaks, the bandits and other scum. Today, with a feeling of pride shared by all of us in our wonderful country, they will say: "It's marvellous what we are accomplishing."

Under the guidance of the Party our youth routed the enemies at the fronts of the Civil War, set up collective farms, built up our industry, and launched socialist emulation on a countrywide scale. Outstanding workers like Stakhanov and Vinogradov came to the fore from the ranks of our youth, and now they are teaching older, experienced people how to work.

The seeds of Bolshevism have indeed been planted in fertile soil!

The future belongs to you, and we, the overaged, are with you with all our hearts!

1938

THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE THEATRE OF COLLECTIVE FARM COSSACK YOUTH IN VESHENSKAYA

Comrades,

We are celebrating today the second anniversary of the Veshenskaya Theatre of Collective-Farm Cossack Youth. All of you can remember how matters once stood in these remote *stanitsas* and farmsteads so far removed from the big cultural centres. There were the occasional travelling troupes, hastily knocked together by some enterprising impressario, whose only concern was to make as much money as they could. These people had no relation to art whatsoever, and what they did was give a sorry imitation of art. Or again a "war invalid" would suddenly appear in our parts. Fed up with manufacturing spoons at some workshop for invalids, he'd decided to become an entertainer and go wandering about the *stanitsas* and farmsteads showing card and other tricks. Travelling musicians also visited us occasionally, and the music they produced was horrible to hear, it literally made you choke as the local people put it. A great many of the inhabitants had never seen an actor in their lives and had no idea what a theatre was at all. Not just the collective farmers, either. Even our boys and girls went through school and grew up without ever having been to a theatre.

This theatre has been sponsored by our Party and our Soviet Government in their constant concern for the cultural development of the population.

At jubilees it is customary to dispense praise, bows and salutations. This jubilee is a joyful occasion. The company has done a good job of work and we, naturally, congratulate and applaud them. But we've got to have a serious talk about the further development of our theatre. It is still in its infancy. But like every infant it has to grow up. In our country a person comes

of age when he is eighteen, but we have no desire to wait for sixteen years until our theatre comes of age. We are certain that it will grow up much more quickly, and will attain maturity before many years are out.

What, then, must the theatre do? Work on good plays only—that's the main thing. Modern plays must be selected with care, because very often an inferior play finds its way to the stage on the strength of its topical subject matter. Not every topical play is a good play. Our spectators want to see the plays of Griboyedov, Gogol, Ostrovsky, and the Western classics. Two of Ostrovsky's plays have so far been staged, and look how well they have been received!

The question of how to take our shows to the most remote collective farms needs serious thought. What our theatre should take there are not concerts, a hodge-podge of carelessly selected numbers, but complete, good plays. Your mission is to popularise great, genuine art among the masses.

The regional arts administration obviously underestimates the importance of this theatre. The frequent change of art directors has a detrimental effect on the quality of the company's work. It is time the administration appointed an art director who would be prepared to work here for several years, a person who would gladly devote all his knowledge and abilities to the task of building up a really accomplished theatre, and one who would come to love the company and hate to part with it.

I am sure that the bright little flame of art which has been kindled in our Veshenskaya will soon spread to the district centres of our region as well. And art will penetrate deeper and deeper into the masses.

The Veshenskaya theatre will justify our hopes, it will become a theatre of socialist realism, a theatre of high-class production.

Let us wish our theatre to do so well that it will earn even more popularity with the public!

1939

YOUR FAITHFUL COMPANION

Mankind's finest sons, the men who struggled and are at present struggling for the happiness of the working people everywhere in the world, were keen on books from childhood and from books they enriched their knowledge of life.

The light of knowledge, glimmering as through a narrow slit in the darkness, startles the child who is making his first attempt to put together odd, and as yet mysterious letters, to make words which his mind can grasp. This is a past stage for you, dear boys and girls, though not very recent. What you see before you now is not a glimmering of light through a narrow slit, but a wide-open door into the dazzling world, into life whose laws you are called upon to master and which you will build up, guided by the splendid ideas of communism.

Never forget that in order to fling open these doors into the world of light and knowledge for all of you without exception and in order to keep these doors forever open, your ancestors, your grandfathers, fathers and elder brothers had to fight a valiant struggle in which much strength was expended and much of their blood was shed.

You must stride bravely towards the light and love books with all your hearts! A book is not just your best friend but also your faithful companion for life.

1952

From A SPEECH MADE AT THE THIRD CONGRESS OF KAZAKH WRITERS

. . .It goes without saying that we must write much better now than we did twenty or thirty years ago. The cultural requirements of our readers which have grown immeasurably, demand it of us. And it also goes without saying that under the circumstances friendly criticism is most essential. Both the established and the young writers must be criticised.

But, of course, criticism differs, as everyone knows. In his speech Mukhtar Auezov very correctly said that you criticise those you care for and worry about.

An example of such friendly criticism will be found in the reports made by the leading writers of Kazakhstan. If there is a certain sharpness in their judgement it is motivated by concern for the literary fate of their comrades.

It is a very different matter with Georgi Munblit's article concerning Sabit Mukanov which was published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta.* Sneering criticism such as this one cannot possibly be regarded as a wish to help a comrade correct the

lapses in his book. This article is not aimed to help the writer, but to destroy him.

When a writer deliberately writes an ideologically corrupt book and tries on some pretext or another to propagate ideas that are politically harmful to the people and the Party, I'm all for criticism aimed at destruction. There is no need to mince words in this case, and the pen may be wielded as a lethal weapon. But when one of our writers comes a cropper he must be given friendly help, he must have it pointed out to him where he went wrong so that he will not make the same mistakes in the future. If he is too proud to heed the opinion of several of his comrades, he will have to accept collective assistance, and a wide creative discussion of his book will be the best means of making him see right from wrong. Even the vainest of men, provided Nature has not short-changed him in common sense, will then understand that it just cannot be that "the sergeant alone is in step, while the whole company is out of step".

As an example of not very conscientious criticism one may name Konstantin Simonov's article about Ilya Ehrenburg's story *The Thaw*. Simonov glosses over the book's imperfections instead of speaking about them frankly and sharply. No, it was not the good of literature that guided Simonov when he was writing this article.

When reviewing the work of young writers, critics ought to treat them with a father's strictness and care. I was once told how the golden eagle teaches its young to fly. He makes them take wing and, without letting them come down, forces them to climb higher and higher, driving them until they are utterly exhausted. Only thus will a young golden eagle learn to soar in the sky.... We have to use this method to teach our young writers, forcing them to climb higher and higher, so that eventually they'll shape into real eagles in literature and not wet crows or domestic hens. But the golden eagle does not break the wings of its young for not being able to or being afraid to climb to the required height at the first try. Nor do our critics have the right to break the budding writers' wings. But, unfortunately, such things do happen. An over-zealous critic will hit a young writer over the head with a hefty club, knocking whatever confidence he had out of him, and there's no knowing if this fledgeling will ever take wing again.

I do not share the fear that paying a young writer well must inevitably give him a swelled head and enfeeble his creative strength. A man with healthy moral principles will not get a

swelled head in either his young or his old age, no matter how famous and celebrated he may be. And a person with a bit of rot in his soul will start growing conceited when he's still in his cradle....

In life, it also happens like this: a young writer writes a mediocre book, and for this fruit of, say, three years' labour receives a scanty remuneration. The book does not qualify for a second edition, and the writer cannot afford to devote himself to the full-time job of correcting his mistakes and even less so to writing a new book, because after settling his outstanding debts all he has left is just enough to spare him the calamity of losing his last pair of pants. And so he drops out of literature, perhaps never to return.

And what I want to ask you is this: which of the big writers began with works of genius? As a rule, their first efforts were always mediocre.

Say what you will, but I'm all for squeezing us venerable writers, and particularly the venerable playwrights, on the fees a bit for the benefit of the young.

They are our hope for the future, and it is they who will not let literature grow old....

1954

IT IS A GREAT HONOUR TO WRITE FOR THE PEOPLE

(Speech addressed to a seminar of young writers of Rostov and Kamensk Regions)

Dear friends,

All of us gathered here, people writing in different genres and different styles, share the same views, and are prompted by the same desire to speak the truth to the people. Our responsibility is enormous. For it is a great honour to write for the people. Here I have been listening to the poetry of Comrade Mikhailov, a young poet, and to the harsh criticism of his comrades. It does not matter that there's a bit too much water in his poetry—the superfluous water can always be drained off. What does matter is that this young poet, like his older comrades, wants to speak the truth to the people.

A writer's responsibility to the people is very, very great. All of us together and each one of us separately must be the

conscience of the people. And this is what I have to say to you, my young friends: a young author does not always have it easy, in fact he very often has a pretty rough time, to be quite honest, but still don't be in a hurry to put into words what has not yet quite taken shape in your mind. The book you produce should evoke a response and live a long life.

More and more new blood is flowing into literature, and the membership of the Rostov writers' organisation is increasing steadily.

Rostov had a bright constellation of writers before the war as well. There was the poet Grigory Kats and the wonderfully gifted prose writer Alexander Busygin. They both fell in battle, heroically defending our Motherland. New, young writers came to take their place in the ranks, and you, too, will eventually take the place of your older comrades. All of us together form the great army of Soviet writers, a mighty literary cohort "fist", so to say.

Now, you have gathered here to speak about our creative endeavour. That's very good. These problems have to be discussed hotly and passionately. You must put your heart into the work, and dedicate yourself to our difficult profession with all your being.

I want to warn you once again: however hard you may have it at first, don't seek easy success. After all, you are our replacements, our hope. You are our future. Many of you already have a present, and all of you have a future, a writer's future. You are the splendid representatives of a splendid people. My dear friends, I wish you well, I wish you success and great accomplishments!

1955

SPEECH AT THE THIRD ALL-UNION CONFERENCE OF YOUNG WRITERS

My friends from our writers' leadership make it very awkward for me when they insist that I should say something "profound" to young writers.

"What, exactly?"

"Oh well, tell them that the work of a writer is not easy, that at times it is quite hard, in fact, that it's a sacred cause, and so on."

Well, here I am, and what happens? I have before me 360 of the most gifted and most able young writers. And is there any point in my preaching the rudiments to such able people? So, I am going to speak to them as an equal speaks to equals.

With regard to literature and this present conference, I have to say that I disagree with the speaker, Comrade Azhayev, on some points.

For instance. I did not like that part of his speech where while speaking well of one book or another he feels it essential to put a fly in the ointment. He might have kept this until the seminar where all the merits and demerits of the book, the author's manner of writing and all the other creative components will be discussed in detail.

Need these details and particulars have been mentioned from this rostrum?

I thought Comrade Azhayev very aptly quoted Gorky about it being one thing to learn how to bark trees and quite another to weave sandals from the bark.

I shall not take up too much of your time. Continuing the simile, it's best to bark trees in one familiar part of the forest and do the job thoroughly, rather than do a bit here and a bit there. Here's an example to illustrate my point. Our writers, old and young alike, dashed off to the virgin land development regions to hunt for themes and plots, and the result is not very good, in fact it is simply deplorable in many cases. They made a stay of one or two months there, perhaps even six months, and barked quite a lot of trees, but they still have not learnt how to weave sandals from this bark.

Most of you come from the provinces which is a very good thing, as it means you're keeping closer to life.

What I'd like to warn you against is becoming overaged *young* writers, old maids in literature, so to speak. May your creative maturity come soon. It will be welcomed not just by us, writers, but also by readers—our exacting, interested readers who are probably more appreciative than readers anywhere else in the world.

And another thing in the same connection: please don't keep wearing rompers till your old age, because we still have some writers among us, I'm sorry to say, who do.

In conclusion of my short speech I should like to wish you—not just in the coming year but in the life ahead of you—more daring and great accomplishments in your work.

1956

NEVER FORGET FRIENDSHIP

I warmly hug all the participants in this festival, our own dear young people and our dear guests. Please don't let the word "hug" put you out: I know there are so many of you, gathered here in Moscow, that hugging you physically would, of course, be more than any one person could hope to do. But, like all writers, I have such a loving heart that I could mentally hug the lot of you, even if you were twice as many!

Pity this is 1957 and not 1927, because thirty years ago I might have been a full and equal member of this gathering and not the aged guest I am now. The thing is I was born too early, and I have only myself to blame for this.

I hope you enjoy this festival and have a jolly good time. But in your merrymaking you must not forget about the friendship and alliance of young people from all the continents and countries, remembering that this alliance will help mankind to preserve peace in the world.

1957

A LETTER TO LVOV STUDENTS

Dear comrades,

Apparently you know that I'm a slow writer. In the thirteen years that have elapsed since the war I wrote three books, a rate which I consider normal for me.

This year I finished the second and last part of *Virgin Soil Upturned*, in the autumn I shall finish the first part of *They Fought for Their Country*, and this plus an assortment of post-war articles and feature stories, makes three books.

The publication of two books in the course of one year is easily explained: I have been working on these two books simultaneously.

And then, children, is quantity the main thing, to be quite honest?

I hope my answer satisfies you. From the bottom of my heart I wish you to do well in your studies and be happy in everything else. I am not wishing you good health because you are young people and should be in the pink of health without my good wishes.

Yours, *M. Sholokhov*

1958

THE PRIDE OF MY COUNTRY

My dear Komsomol boys and girls, my own past youth, the justified hope of our country and our Party, allow me to salute you on the eve of your congress, to hug you and wish you, the pride of my country, success and happiness in work, study, and personal life.

1958

A LETTER TO TWO PUPILS OF SCHOOL NO. 2 IN BELAYA TSERKOV, A VILLAGE IN KIEV REGION

Dear Vitaly and Alexander,

I have just returned from Moscow and therefore could not send you my good wishes in time. But your letter was so delightful that I decided to answer it even at this late date.

You begin by wishing me many more years of life and new successes in my work. That's very kind of you. Thank you. And in the second paragraph you say: "A short while ago many of us put our names down for a collection of your works, but we are sorry it is not a complete collection."

Don't you know that a complete collection is published only after the author's death? In other words, you rascals are sorry that I haven't died yet? Now, that's really nice of you! Pity Belaya Tserkov is so far from Veshenskaya or I'd come and get even with you for your "kind" wishes.... Still I'm not as spiteful as you, and from the bottom of my heart wish the best of everything to all the pupils of your 10th "A" form—excellent marks, good health, happiness, and further progress after finishing school.

I hug you, my dear boys, and remain,

Yours *M. Sholokhov.*

See what a good thing your letter was? Joking with you was a pleasant change, and now I'll find it easier to get down to work again.

1959

TO MY DON COUNTRYMEN

Now that I am back home again I hasten to inform my fellow villagers that by decision of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR the construction of the new school building in stanitsa Karginskaya will begin this year. I have donated the whole of my Lenin Prize to the construction of the new school to be built in place of the one where once upon a time I learnt how to read and write.

My affectionate regards to all the inhabitants of Karginskaya.

1960

HEARTFELT THANKS

(From the answering speech made in the Kremlin during the presentation of the Lenin Prize for "Virgin Soil Upturned")

On this momentous occasion I should like to thank first of all the Soviet people who have armed me with a writer's pen and provided me with an inexhaustible source of material for my novels.

I also want to thank my numerous friends—the readers who have nominated me for the Lenin Prize.

My heartfelt thanks to the Central Committee and the Soviet Government for so highly appraising my work. And I naturally want to thank the Lenin Prize Committee whose forgiveness I beg for mentioning it last.

I know that when a person is presented with a prize it is customary for him to promise to work as hard in the future. My advanced years and the specificities of my profession compel me to be more cautious in this respect.

Surely I can't be expected to promise like a good schoolboy to get nothing but top marks for everything I write next year? But I can tell you with a man's firmness and with absolute confidence in my abilities and powers that I shall continue to serve my Party and my people as faithfully with my pen.

I have to say that my relations with readers are quite decent and, on the whole, they're good. Constant contact with readers strengthens the author's confidence in his powers and helps him in his work. But with some of my readers I'm not exactly on

At a session of the Bulgarian-Soviet Club of Artistic Youth

Sholokhov speaks

At home

Sholokhov speaks at the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers

bad terms, but how shall I describe it—our relations are a bit cool. Often, the claims made upon the writer are quite exorbitant. One reader, for instance, complained in all seriousness that while the author of *Yuri Miloslavsky* had kept his heroes alive, Sholokhov had killed both Nagulnov and Davidov. "What has this got to do with socialist realism?" he asked. This is not the kind of advice that need be heeded. And in future, too, I shall write as I feel I must.

Here's one more example. I received a wrathful letter from the staff of Lestekhsyrye signed by the manager of the enterprise and three girls. What made them so angry was that in *Virgin Soil Upturned* where I wrote about a lot of different things I made no mention of the business of gathering medicinal herbs. That, too, is an impossible claim. There are many complaints of this sort. But I can't please everybody.

In my case the receipt of a Lenin Prize can be considered a past stage. Next year I should like to see a young writer (and if there are more than one, all the better) standing in my place.

When we first started out on our literary careers we, writers of the older generation, were not pampered with excessive attention—awards and encouragements were not lavished on us. I do not mean to say that admittance into literature has been made so much easier, but what is taking place is the logical process of the old being replaced by the young. And I'm all for this rostrum being mounted by the young.

I may safely presume that I shall never receive another Lenin Prize again, but from this statement it does not follow that I'm going to surrender my place in literature without a fight!

I see here my comrades, writers of the older generation, and I think it won't do for us, laden as we are with life and literary experience, to cede our positions without battle.

I'm all for the young to replace us, but let them sweat a bit first before they can fall in line with us.

I see here the previous years' Lenin Prize winners, and it would not be a bad thing if their presence at the presentation ceremony became a tradition. Next year I shall also be sitting there among them as one of our young writers receives his well-deserved prize. It would not be a bad idea if it became a tradition in the sphere of literature and art to symbolically hand down the unquenchable torch of socialist art.

1960

From A SPEECH MADE AT THE 22ND CONGRESS OF THE CPSU

Dear comrade delegates,

I believe I will be voicing what everybody feels if I say that during these momentous days of the Congress when we are adopting the new Programme of our Leninist Party, our very life, the life of the entire Soviet people, seems to be infused with a new and very special emotion. It is as though a fresh and invigorating gust of wind has blown into our faces, revealing distant, alluring horizons before our eyes. Our breathing is easy and deep, and we can clearly discern the contours of that desirable future to which we shall certainly come in twenty years from now.

That's really how magnificent and noble is the Programme aimed with its entire content and essence at the happiness and joy of working mankind!

Is it not natural therefore to want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts to those who drew up this Programme, to those who have embodied the people's dreams and long-cherished hopes in clearly set tasks, seeing ahead into our near and far future with truly Leninist farsightedness.

When one thinks what our mighty Party has overcome and accomplished, and how much more it has to accomplish, a lump rises in one's throat, honestly, because it's so wonderful really! And, truth to tell, one sometimes feels so boastfully proud of the Party and the Soviet people that one says to oneself with impulsive admiration and affectionate familiarity: "Aren't you a gifted lot of people! You're strong devils, aren't you! Strong in every respect, too!"

We all know that it has been prescribed for us by history to make the steep ascent to communism. We know perfectly well that it will be hard going at times, that our mouths will feel parched from the strain. But then, hitherto unseen horizons will be revealed to us when we have reached the summit, and tired in body but never in spirit as we shall be after scaling this height, a healing, life-giving spring will quench our thirst.

In its world significance the difficult ascent will be a great and honourable undertaking, as great as the goal towards which we are advancing. But then a great people must travel a great road, just as great ships must sail big seas.

And no setbacks or difficulties will daunt our courageous people, led by the fearless and wise party of Communists. We shall attain communism despite the intrigues of the enemies and contrary to the pessimistic whining of the unbelievers. We shall attain it because the path into the future is blazed by the ten-million-strong communist vanguard of our people who are magnificent both in feats of labour and feats of arms.

What are the Egyptian pyramids and other ancient monuments if not the piteous attempts of people to leave a memory of themselves in the history of mankind! All these monuments will disappear with time, for they are doomed to dust and decay. Now communism will indeed be an indestructible monument, impervious to time and the forces of nature, to stand till eternity, immortal as the sacred name of Lenin. Glory to all the builders of a communist society! Glory to our foreign brothers, friends and comrades who by word and deed, never hesitating or dissembling, are helping us, the van and the lookout.

When I think of the Party, of Party friends and comrades, Gogol's memorable words come to mind. Do you remember in *Taras Bulba* the passage where old Taras speaks to the Zaporozhye Cossacks just before the battle on the approaches to Dubno? He says to them: "There are no ties more holy than comradeship! A father loves his child, a mother loves her child, and the child loves his father and mother. But that's not it, brothers, for even a beast loves its young. Only humans can become related by spirit and not by blood."

They're splendid words, honestly. We, Communists, have become related through the idea of Marx-Engels-Lenin, the idea for which the Communist Party is fighting a winning battle, and for us there are no ties more holy than our Party comradeship. We also love our children and our wives, but as Taras Bulba says: "That's not it, brothers." No offence is meant to our children and our wives. There's no helping it, they'll just have to accept the fact, that's all. But this is where I get stumped.... It's self-evident that our wives will be immediately outraged by the idea that our ties of Party comradeship are more holy for us than our matrimonial ties. I suppose I have put my foot in it by mentioning wives at all. Taras Bulba, in fact, has not said a word about them. And now I'll probably be the first to get it in the neck at home for digging up this quotation from Gogol's immortal creation. But I'm not afraid, because I believe in your sincere sympathy and,

sustained by it, I shall stand up to the grimmest trials awaiting me at my home and hearth. Only please don't forget to mention me in your prayers tonight, that's all I ask!

But feelings of comradeship are understood differently by us and by the capitalists. This is strikingly illustrated in O'Henry's story "The Roads We Take". The plot is very simple: three bandits rob the mail coach in an American express. One of them is killed by the train guard, and the other two escape with the loot. As they gallop off, one of the horses falls and breaks a leg. There's only Bolivar left, a strong horse that could easily carry the two men, but its owner with the fitting name of Shark Dodson decides differently. Very calmly he says that Bolivar "cannot carry double", and as calmly fires point-blank at his friend.

With the money he has stolen Shark Dodson becomes a prosperous, respectable bourgeois and opens his own stockbroker's office. When his friend, another financier, is threatened with bankruptcy Dodson ruins him as calmly as he had once shot that other friend, repeating the same phrase: "Bolivar cannot carry double."

Speakers at this congress have had a great deal to say about factionalists, about those who scorned the holy ties of Party comradeship. Here at the congress we came to know new details about their criminal activity. The question naturally arises: how much longer must we stand in the Party ranks hand in hand with people who have caused the Party so much irremediable wrong? Are we not too tolerant towards those who have on their conscience the deaths of thousands of the Party's and country's faithful sons, and the wrecked lives of these victims' families?

The congress is the supreme body of the Party. Let it pass its stern but just judgement on the factionalists and renegades.

And, in order to finish off this unpleasant conversation about unpleasant people, permit me in conclusion to quote another bit from Taras Bulba's speech where he spoke about friendship.

Old Taras also struggled against factinalists in his day, only they were called apostates then. And this is what he said: "But even the dirtiest of traitors, however rotten he may be, even if he's been rolling in soot worshipping the devil, even he has a grain of Russian feeling, brothers. This feeling will awaken in him one day, and he, the poor wretch, will throw himself down on the floor, clutch his head in his hands, and loudly

curse his dastardly life, prepared to atone for his shameful deeds with any torment."

But, of course, this was said about apostates from among the Zaporozhye Cossacks, and it's a moot question whether today's renegades will have the courage to "loudly curse their dastardly life", and whether they will have the resoluteness to "atone for their shameful deeds with any torment". Somehow it's hard to believe that they will: they're not that kind of men. They're renegades alright, but of a different brand. However, time will show.

One can imagine the outcry which the bourgeois press will raise: look what these communist writers are really like, they'll say. Instead of displaying humaneness, as the spirit of their profession demands, they are calling for vengeance! Something of the sort will certainly be written by the ever obliging bourgeois pen-pushers. I have the answer ready for these mercenary scribblers: "Keep your shirts on, gentlemen of little esteem, nobody is plotting vengeance, nobody wants the intrigue-poisoned blood of the factionalists, but they must and shall stand answer for the crimes they have committed against the people and the Party. Such is the universal law."

Humaneness, just like comradeship, is another concept which we and the capitalists, or people sharing their world outlook, understand differently. Like dentists we pull out the decayed tooth which bothers a strong and healthy organism, thus performing an act of humaneness. For comparison, here is an example of a different concept of humaneness. When I was in Italy, my attention was caught by a gorgeous mansion on the outskirts of Rome. I was told that it was a sanatorium for cats. Not those skinny, mangy cats of course which are played with by the hungry, undernourished kids in the city's slums—children of Italy's underpaid or unemployed workers—but the sleek pets owned by Italian and other millionaires and millionairesses.

These cats, ill from idleness and obesity, are treated by experienced doctors, they are bathed, brushed and sprinkled with scent by qualified hospital sisters, and attentive ward nurses feed these blasted patients with all kinds of dainties, take them out for an airing, and pamper them in every way. And a stone's throw away, hungry children are digging in the garbage, gazing at you with unchildlike hopelessness in their sunken eyes. Is this also called humaneness? In our language it is called the vileness of utterly corrupt souls. And let the capitalists throw the lofty word "humane" out of

their vocabulary, for it is not for the use of beasts in human guise.

Being a professional writer I ought to talk about literature, but, like all of you, I am a Communist first, and that's why I began with what stirs me most, although I'm not forgetting for a moment that literature is also part of the general Party cause. To cut a long story short, I'm asking you to forgive me for this lengthy introduction, and I shall now pass on to literary matters....

A great many books appear which very soon go back into the melting pot, so to speak. The reason? We all know what the reason is: a disparity between the inferior quality of the production and the high demands of the readers. Still, the situation is not as disastrous as it may appear at first and perfunctory glance. A very welcome process is taking place which is little noticeable to the readers: a whole constellation of young and truly gifted writers, whose stories have already been published in the periodicals, are developing into mature and very promising masters. This is typical not just of the Russian but also of all the national literatures of the Soviet Union. I am not going to enumerate them as readers know their names well enough, and all I want to say is this: they have to be helped in every way so they might have a chance to work for two or three years without worrying about the morrow and without having to tear themselves away from the large canvasses which they have had in mind for a long time and for which they have been storing up their competently selected material.

The number of such writers will grow considerably if we give our assistance not just to the authors living in the capitals but also to the provincials of whom there are a great many scattered all over the country. All these people know life well from personal experience, they have travelled a lot and seen a lot, but the main thing is that they are talented writers who, unfortunately, cannot afford to devote themselves wholly to the job of writing big—not meaning size alone—novels. They are the people we should stake our winnings on. In any case the majority won't fail us—and that's not so very little.

Some good books have been published lately, but they are painfully few. We could have produced more, and the thought is very saddening for us, much more so than it is for you, comrade delegates and readers.

I still contend that one of the main reasons why our literature is not keeping abreast and why mediocre books make their

appearance is the writers' alienation from real life—a phenomenon which has become established in the writers' milieu—and their superficial acquaintance with our fast moving life and its continuously changing features. . . .

An author who writes about collective-farm or state-farm people should, in my opinion, possess some knowledge of agriculture on an agronomist's level at least. Those who write about an iron and steel factory, about its workers, engineers and technicians, absolutely must have as good a knowledge of production as a highly-qualified worker. A writer who has devoted his pen to our army has certainly to be no less of an expert on military matters than were Kuprin and Lev Tolstoi, otherwise he'll be talking through his hat and his opus will be cheap stuff. This is exactly what happens rather frequently. Now, a love story is something everyone is free to write—this is one subject that does not call for any special knowledge. . . .

There is no forbidding the young provincial poets who are creating "eternal values" to come to Moscow or any of the other large cities. They hear about the triumphant appearance of our fashionable boudoir poets at their literary evenings in Moscow, with the inevitable detail of mounted police keeping back the crowd and the arty girl-fans shrieking in hysterical adulation. The provincial young poets also want to become the craze of these girls dressed in impossibly narrow trousers and unreasonably huge sweaters. They, too, want to taste of the sweet fruit of fame. And so they stream to Moscow with the zealotry of true believers making a pilgrimage to Mecca. And no persuasions or quarantines will hold them back. They're bent on getting to Moscow by hook or by crook.

What will it matter for, say, Fedin, Leonov, Maxim Rylsky or me if a young woman points us out in the street to whoever she's with and gushes: "Look, look, that's so and so!" There's no longer any kick in it for us. You squirm when you hear your name mentioned so unceremoniously, yet it's flattering to a young writer, and some of the young are really tickled pink. One need not be indulgent, but still one must try to understand the young.

Many of you have probably seen the peasants in the old days sifting the seeds before sowing through a large sieve suspended from ropes. The dust and chaff got blown away by the wind, and the full-weight seeds remained. It will be the same in literature: the chaff will be blown away, and the seeds will

remain. It's life itself that revolves this sieve, and the necessary process of cleansing will necessarily take place.

That is how matters stand with the young. And it's no better with the elderly writers. How can you urge a city man to venture in his old age into the province which appears such a frightening place to him? And then what good will he be to anyone there? Personally, I've long given up the hope of moving the writers closer to the people they write about. It's a hopeless business.

The hope has been voiced here at the congress that we writers and people engaged in the arts will continue to be the kind and wise advisers of the people. But a person who does not know life can hardly make a good adviser. You'll never extricate yourself from the mess he gets you into with his advice.... Really, how can a writer—a typical townsman who has last seen the village thirty or forty years ago and has completely lost touch with it, and some have never been in touch—recommend anything worthwhile in matters of production to an experienced collective farm chairman or state farm director who knows his job inside out? Even if it comes to moral problems, some of these modest-looking farm people can easily steal a march on some of the writers. It's best for an author who can't tell spring from winter crops, and oats from barley, not to aspire to the role of uninvited adviser and if, in his unwisdom, he does get it into his head to offer advice he'd better make a quick getaway while the going is good.

I realise that my speech is rather gloomy, but I honestly can't help myself: I'm devoured by horrible greed, I want more good books, and they're so few. It makes me angry at myself and others, but what's the use? These questions must be decided collectively and without undue haste.

Haste in a matter such as this will hardly be of much help. And here's another trouble—troubles, as you know, don't come singly. In his very good and interesting speech, Comrade Podgorny, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, missed what I thought was a very good opportunity: why couldn't he have mentioned that it was not only in Kiev that the Ukrainian writers were elected delegates to this congress? He might have said: seeing that you, dear comrade writers, were elected in the regional centres of the Ukraine to this Congress of the CPSU why don't you make your home there, live there in good health and happiness and write about the local working people who had voted for you? If you were elected in Poltava Region, write about the

Poltavians; if it was in Chernigov Region, write about the Chernigovites. But no, he did not say it. And now the writers will once again go back to the capital city of Kiev, and everything will be as before. The same claim may be made on the secretaries of other regions which simply teem with writers. The secretaries ought to have made up to the writers and invited them to their far from quiet provincial towns and villages for a militant and anything but sleepy existence which would give them a profound knowledge of life and inspire them for truly creative effort. I think this matter can still be remedied.

Our literature is a front-ranking literature and not just for its ideological content alone. Our connections with publishers abroad are expanding. Our books are published everywhere. The subject matter, rather than the form, appeals to the readers, as interest in our life, our present-day reality is very keen in foreign countries.

But we, Soviet writers, have more complaints against foreign critics than even against our own. If in their majority our critics have no knowledge of life at all, foreign critics have hardly a notion of it, let alone knowledge. Very often the complaints they make about us are quite unreasonable. They say that we are partial in our writing. And what would they like us to be?

Say I'm writing about a Soviet soldier, a man who's infinitely dear and precious to me. How can I speak badly of him? He's mine, from his side-cap down to his footcloths, and I try not to notice such things as the pockmarks on his face or certain flaws in his character. And if I do notice these things I try to write about him in such a way that readers should come to love him together with his funny little pockmarks and the slight flaws in his character.

Most of the people I see here before me have a store of life and other experience. You know that sometimes the freckles on the face of a plain woman become more precious to a man than all the flawless, satin-smooth, beautiful faces in the world. And the tired wrinkles radiating from the corners of the eyes of the woman he loves seem lovelier than the sparkling, carefree smile of a young flirt. And sometimes, too, a woman you'd never look at twice has such a handsome man fall in love with her that you simply gasp! All sorts of things happen in life, and you know it as well as I do. So how can a writer, that is if he's not a "cold hack", write with cool indifference about people he loves?

Chekhov is reputed to have said: "When you sit down to write be cold as ice." I do not agree with this. An artist cannot be cold when he creates! You will not create a real literary work if you have the blood of a fish and a heart that's so fatty it won't stir up, and you'll never find a way to your readers' hearts.

I want the blood to boil in the writer's veins when he's writing, I want his face to turn pale from his controlled hatred for the enemy when he writes about him, I want him to laugh and weep together with his characters, whom he loves and who are dear to him.

Only thus will a real work of art and not a counterfeit be created.

I am talking shop now, and I don't suppose you can be interested. I shall now dwell briefly on the tasks confronting Soviet literature.

There is much we shall have to fight for and in the first place, as I see it, for influence over our young people. Ours are splendid young people. The country owes a great deal to their enthusiasm and their heroic toil. But a very insignificant part of our youth is restless in spirit, seeking adventure in our everydays and failing to find it. And adventure is right there, all they have to do is stretch out their hands for it and take a closer look at the life around them. It is our duty to win this youth away from alien influences and instil in them the correct attitude to work and heroic endeavour.

This is not the only problem that faces writers today and will face them tomorrow. The Soviet family, the ethics of the new man, and the titanic effort of our people—all this wants to be embodied in artistic images, all this demands to be described in big, embracing works of fiction. We, people in the arts, understand this very well and are perfectly aware of the magnitude of our responsibility to the people and the Party.

In conclusion I should like to say the following. Among the delegates present here there are many who are lovingly called "beacons". It's a good word and very apt. I want to ask these "beacons" not to forget that they are lighting the way not just for the people working in their own particular field of endeavour. The "beacons" of science, technology, industry and agriculture are shining for us, writers, too. And we gaze up at them with envy because in our effort we have not yet attained what they have. But their light falls upon us and warms us, and shows through the gloom in the hours of dusk.

My great, heartfelt thanks to those who shed this light.

And the same heartfelt thanks to those who accumulate the energy for the carriers of light, our great thanks for their warm concern about us which we do not fully deserve, perhaps, but which we shall yet become worthy of, I am quite certain.

1961

TO THE YOUNG PIONEERS

My very best wishes to the Young Pioneers on the 40th birthday of their organisation, and my congratulations on the high government award presented to it on this momentous occasion. My dear Young Pioneers, be healthy and happy and study hard, and when you have grown up you shall become true Leninists.

1962

TO THE YOUNG FARMERS

Youth is a season of busy, exuberant activity—that's what youth is given man for. And maturity is given man to admire your enthusiastic, sincere effort for the glory of our Motherland, and to wish you the best success in your noble undertaking. This is what I am doing with pleasure, with fatherly affection, and complete confidence in your ability to accomplish what you have set out to do.

1964

TO THE YOUTH OF VESHENSKAYA

My dear young friends—Komsomol boys and girls of Veshenskaya district!

I wish you the best of success in your work and study in the coming year. Quality is the new demand made upon all of us

by the Party and this naturally includes you too. Let us take this to mean not merely an appeal to raise the quality of production, but also to raise the qualities essential to a member of the Komsomol in study, in creative endeavour, in his seekings, in his relations with people, in friendship. In short, in everything which characterises the Soviet man.

1965

TO THE YOUTH OF THE DON COUNTRY

Dear comrades, members of the Komsomol!

We, the older generation of Communists, love you so because in you we see our militant revolutionary youth which has already become a precious memory, also because you are here with us living and creating in the present, and mainly because you are our bright hope in the approaching radiant future.

You see, our affection is three-dimensional, and this must be why our love is both jealous and exacting.

You have done very much for the construction of socialism, and we are certain that you can do much more.

Please live up to our expectations and prove your worth in deed wherever you may be, whether you are working, studying, or serving in our Army—everywhere where the invincible Komsomol spirit is present.

From the bottom of my heart I wish you success, great darings, and happiness.

1965

ENTRY MADE IN THE YOUNG GUARD PUBLISHERS VISITORS' BOOK

I always gladly come to the Young Guard office. I seem to shed years when I'm with these young people. . . .

6.3.65

M. Sholokhov

THE LAND NEEDS YOUNG HANDS

(From a talk addressed to the youth)

...We must cultivate in the rural youth a love and respect for the peasant's toil, for work in agricultural production, as young people, here and elsewhere, are quitting farming for a number of reasons. I have travelled in many countries abroad, and the same is typical of Sweden, Norway and Denmark, in fact the urge to move to town is observable everywhere. Now, I can understand this urge in Finland and Sweden where the farmstead system prevails. There are no large villages, people live far apart, the houses stand at a distance of four kilometres or so from one another, and so it can be easily explained and appreciated. An outing to the pictures means a journey of twelve or fifteen kilometres, and as for young people getting together in a club or somewhere, there's simply no question of that.

In our conditions this urge is not justified. We have big staffs working at the collective farms and state farms, we have cinemas and clubs—everything placed at the service of our youth. I hardly think that girls living in Rostov go to the theatre more often than you do. Therefore, this cannot be the reason. The tense rhythm of the work and association with people of your own age and views ought to make up for the lack of excitement or fresh impressions in village life.

The land needs young hands. At present, in the light of the resolutions adopted by the March Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the CPSU, large-scale measures are being undertaken, good prospects are opening up before state farm workers and collective farmers, they will earn more money and, evidently, this will be an incentive. People who have not secured a decent enough flat in town and are not as well fixed up as they would like to be will return to the villages. I am trusting in this reverse process.

You must understand that the Government and the Party cannot put obstacles in the way of those young people who want to work in industry. It's up to you to decide whether you want to go to Taganrog, or Rostov, or stay here in Veshenskaya.

We believe there are indications of a praiseworthy tendency to remain on the land. Terenty Semyonovich Maltsev was

approached by graduates of the Arbuzov school in a village just outside Moscow who had arrived at the unanimous decision that all the Komsomol members among them would remain in their home-village to work. Their decision, they say, has been prompted by the March Plenary Session of the Central Committee.

We are not quite lacking in entertainment here in the village. True, there is not as much of it as there is in town. But we do have theatrical troupes, if not complete companies, giving guest performances for us ever so often. The Rostov Philharmonic Society is doing good work too, and its musicians visit us occasionally, as you all know.

The same may be observed in the cultural life of our neighbours in Volgograd and Voronezh regions. The Voronezh Choir serves its region very well. Volgograd Region has its own theatre in Uryupinsk. It's a mobile theatre and it starts its tour of the district at the beginning of the year, finishing up in December or thereabouts, having travelled all over the region.

Conditions are changing, as you can see for yourselves.

I don't think of myself, for instance, as living somewhere far removed from culture. At least I have never felt it so. (Maybe it's because of the kind of work I do.)

In a word, it must be reiterated again and again: agricultural skill is a very important and very much needed skill for our country, and it seems to me that you yourselves must decide what to do.

And now, let us go on to questions of art.

As for my own plans, I am intending to finish my novel *They Fought for Their Country*, and after that I want to try my hand in dramaturgy. While we're on the subject, I must say that things are far from well with us in this genre. We have too few good plays about our contemporaries, our young working people, which could be of an educative influence for our youth.

The cinema. In my opinion the most successful screen adaptation of my works was the film *The Fate of a Man* made by the well-known actor and director Sergei Bondarchuk. As for the films *And Quiet Flows the Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned*, certain mistakes have been made by the script-writers and the directors. In *And Quiet Flows the Don*, for instance, some vivid episodes which should have gone in were left out, and yet there were sequences which could well be done without, and the picture would not have suffered for their absence. The

screenplay, you know, was written by Sergei Gerasimov. And so it was his own purely creative business. I don't think the casting was very happy either.

Just now the Maly Theatre is attempting to stage *And Quiet Flows the Don.* As for the theatres which are thinking of making a stage adaptation of *They Fought for Their Country*, they are being too hasty, in my opinion, because it's very difficult to produce something dramaturgically integral and whole from an unfinished novel.

The Gorky Drama Theatre in Rostov is trying to stage a play based on my story *The Regiment Is Coming.* But what kind of play is it if there's not a single female character in it?

A certain circumstance has occurred which is holding up my novel *They Fought for Their Country.* In Rostov I met General Lukin, who is now on the retired list. This man has a tragic life story. Wounded and unconscious he was taken prisoner by the Germans. He was a staunch, courageous man, a true patriot. The former General Vlasov who betrayed his country and went over to the enemy tried, on orders from his nazi superiors, to persuade Lukin to throw in his lot with his, but Lukin stood firm. He told me a lot of interesting things, and some of them I want to use in my novel.

In connection with the forthcoming 20th anniversary of the Soviet people's victory over nazi Germany, the newspapers are printing many articles, stories and other material about the war. It is up to our youth to assume honorary patronage over the memorials and graves of those who fell in battle in the Great Patriotic War.

The education of the youth is a most important task. Work habits should be cultivated from childhood. When I was in the German Democratic Republic, I had an opportunity to see how people work there. I saw a family weeding a beetroot plot—the mother, the grandmother, and a boy of nine or so,—they were actually crawling on their knees in order to pull out every single weed. With us it's quite a job sometimes to make our young people work. This is where the Komsomol should direct its activities, raising the efficiency of work education in the family and in school to meet the demands of the present day. . . .

1965

BE PATRIOTIC ALWAYS

(From a conversation with Daghestan schoolgirls)

U.M. Murduzalieva, Headmistress of a boarding-school: Many Daghestan women work in public organisations, there are schoolteachers, scientists and other specialists among them. Still, the centuries-old prejudices have not quite been overcome yet, they are very tenacious....

M. A. Sholokhov: This indeed remains a difficult problem, despite the fact that the general cultural development of the country is proceeding apace. You can't just sit back and do nothing, or worse still give these backward tendencies their head, you must fight by subtle and clever means, by disseminating anti-religious ideas, by helping people to understand what is right and what is wrong.

Assiyat Alakova, a schoolgirl: Can feats be performed in our life today?

M. A. Sholokhov: To live life well and usefully for society is also a feat. To be a good Komsomol member is an everyday feat too, though admittedly a small one. Dear children, the might of the Soviet Union is not built on war feats alone. What about honest work in the fields, on collective farms, in state farms, at factories, and in coal mines? The economic might and ideological strength of our country is made up of millions of everyday, unspectacular labour feats. From the point of view of heroics, feats performed in the war looked more impressive, of course. But I have to tell you that wars never created anything. War is a destructive force. And work is a constructive feat. If it were not for the heroic endeavour of workers, peasants and intellectuals there would still be many ruins left by the Great Patriotic War.

Studying well is also a feat.

Old people are fond of saying that everything was better in their day. Not all of this must be taken in full faith, but on some points one cannot help agreeing. I suppose, people of the old generation had their own yardsticks and standards. Now I, for one, have nothing against these new-fangled hairdos that look like miniature haystacks. Essentially, our young people are good people. Assiyat Alakova has just asked me about feats. This is the important thing, and not hair styles. In my time, in the years of the Civil War, ours was a heroic youth. Our youth

will be heroic again if faced with severe trials. But among our youth there are people who succumb to the influence of western propaganda. Foreign ideologists would like to sow the seeds of scepticism and indifference among you. But, you know, it's you who will have to answer for the future of our country and for everything that has been attained by the older generations.

We know very well that there is no such thing as "nobody's" youth. And it does not suit our book at all to surrender such nice girls as you into alien and dirty hands. We are putting up an active fight against the influence of capitalism. Bourgeois ideologists are trying to corrupt you with bad films which find their way to our screens, and with harmful books which our publishing houses print for some inexplicable reason. We Soviet writers are endeavouring to rear our youth in the spirit of our ideology and our Communist views on life and art.

Irrespective of whether a school is in Makhach-Kala, Peschanookopskoye, Veshenskaya, or anywhere else, the pupils must be given an all-round education: this implies such formative influences as the cinema, the theatre and literature, and in the first place, of course, the school subjects.

Our vast land needs people who will make intelligent, hard-working and thrifty masters. Millions of our best people died in the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War so that you could now get together in this atmosphere of peace and security, with no bombers wailing overhead, to discuss our problems of life and economy, and our future, or rather your future. The gains of Soviet power were obtained at a very high cost. And that is why we have to shape you into the kind of people who will be capable of taking on the responsibility of ownership of our land together with its inestimable spiritual and material riches.

Patriotism must be cultivated in people from infancy, from the kindergarten age. It will then be ingrained in a man's mentality, he will be undaunted by any trials, and will carry through life his loyalty to his country and the Party, and his unshakeable conviction that there is nothing wiser, newer, and more humane in the world than the ideas of communism.

1965

From a SPEECH AT THE FOURTH CONGRESS OF SOVIET WRITERS

Dear comrade delegates! Our esteemed guests!

Judging from the first days of the congress, everything is fine in our garden: there has been no sharp criticism, no unnecessary excitement, everything has been nice and quiet, blessed peace and harmony made the keynote, and as a result everyone's breathing is beautifully rhythmical, the smiles are benign, and the general atmosphere is so placid that some of the people present are already dropping off to sleep....

Evidently, the leadership of the Writers' Union took great pains with the groundwork for this congress, for which they naturally deserve our gratitude and our compliments.

Matters were somewhat different, I remember, at the previous congresses: in their speeches the knights of the pen crossed swords, there was the clang of armour, we did not spare one another in our militant fervour and, the battle over, we dispersed, gingerly feeling the bumps we had received and rubbing our bruises, because in those "good old days" we were sparing of praise and grudgingly dispensed indulgences, cakes and candies—in any case, not as generously as Markov and Dudin have lavished them on us at this present congress. As for bumps, we gave them to each other with great assiduity. And deservedly too, sometimes.

I often went out into the ring myself, I gave beatings and got beatings. But I don't want you to think that I am sorry those turbulent congresses are nothing but a memory now and that I'm longing to go into battle again. On the contrary, I delight in this peaceful atmosphere, for like all of you I stand for peace and peaceful co-existence both within the bounds of the Union of Soviet Writers and beyond.

Of course, a congress held in the year of the 50th anniversary of Soviet power is a summing up for us too, in a way. And it is natural that most of the speakers involuntarily dwell upon our past achievements.

However, we must never forget this wise Eastern saying: "When on the road, look in front of you, don't look behind too often if you don't want to trip." Let us give thought to the future so as to trip less often.

I am glad that the mood of this congress is calm and businesslike, but at the same time I'm a bit worried by the

undisguised desire of our Union's leadership to avoid all the sharp corners at all costs. This does not seem quite justified. The congress will have a happy ending anyway, but after all we did not meet for seven years and have a lot to talk about, apart from purely literary problems and tasks.

I do not stand at the helm of the Union, and being a rank-and-file writer who does not know how to issue instructions I beg you to permit me to touch upon some questions which trouble not just me alone, I presume.

To begin with, a few words about this congress. It is a great pleasure for all of us to see among the guests our good friends who have honoured the congress with their presence and their interest in its work. It is gratifying to feel the nearness of Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Anna Seghers, Georgi Jagarov and our other brother and sister writers from the socialist countries, and also such big authors as Pablo Neruda, Charles Snow, Pamela Johnson, Artur Lundkvist and Maria Wine, our good neighbours and friends Martti Larni and Linna Vaino, Maria Teresa Leon, and all our esteemed foreign friends.

I don't know what the other delegates feel, but I myself am extremely distressed by the absence of my dear old friend Ilya Grigoryevich Ehrenburg. I look and look about me and I can't see Ilya Grigoryevich, he's not there, and it makes me feel sort of uneasy, as if something ought to be there and isn't, there's a nagging pain in the pit of my stomach, and sadness casts a black shadow on my otherwise cloudless mood. Where is Ehrenburg? It transpires that he sailed for the Italian shores on the eve of the congress. It was a strange thing to do.

Craftsmen in any workshop have their human dignity besides the dignity of their workshop to uphold, and they also take pride in their craft. Ilya Grigoryevich ought not to have offended all of us. In a collective one should not place oneself above the others and behave like a peevish mother-in-law: "I am the boss, I won't be crossed!"

Another regrettable thing about all this is that bad examples are catching and, emboldened by the way Ehrenburg has flouted the norms of public life, some of our overaged young writers are already cutting capers they'll be ashamed to remember when they have really grown up.

Apropos of the young, having remembered the past let us see what the future promises.

Here is an episode I was told by Fadeyev early in the 1930s when he returned from a visit to a small town in Central Rus-

sia. "There was an ancient monastery there I wanted to see," he told me. "Well, I went there and had a look at it. A very old, tumbledown little church was still functioning inside the monastery. On the way back to town I saw a noisy crowd of boys playing on the slope of the ditch surrounding the monastery, and a boy standing all by himself some distance away watching the fun with envy, but not daring to come near, and amusing himself as best he could by pulling at the wilted grass and scuffing the ground with his heel. Poor kid, I thought, he's been thrown out of the game for something he did. I came up to him and asked: 'Why are you standing here all by yourself? Why don't you play with the others? What have you done?' He glanced up at me, and I saw an adult pain in his eyes. 'My father's a priest,' he told me. 'He's a priest in the church here. That's why the boys won't let me into their game, and I have to play alone.' " Fadeyev fell silent, I remember, and then he said in a strangely sharp voice: "And, do you know, I cried. I turned away and cried. What a horrible childhood to have!" True, he ended his story as he might have been expected to: "However, old man, you know that all villains tend to be a bit sentimental."

Our "difficult" young writers make me think of that priest's little son: they play alone, they do not have a feeling of fellowship, and we, the old sentimental villains, do not even cry from pity for them, nor do we try to really make contact with them. What we do is treat them as an old sergeant treats the recruits.

Seems to me it's time we finished with that. And stopped trying to find a scapegoat. Let us honestly admit that all of us are to blame for our present abnormal relations with a part of the young writers—the Komsomol is to blame, the leadership of the Writers' Union, and we, the old writers. It goes without saying that I cannot and do not wish to absolve myself from blame. So that's how matters stand if we face things squarely. Youth is wont to be arrogant and touchy. Well then, if we are willing to take part of the blame we must also make the first step towards a reconciliation. The gilt won't peel from us, and I think it's the wisest and, if you like, the most farsighted thing we can do.

I have to say that these young people are guilty of some things too, such as adopting the stand of a Fronde and refusing to recognise the accepted norms of behaviour. There are some other things they have on their conscience, too. But let us put it down to their youth and not hold it against

them now, and with the years we'll be more exacting towards them.

Speaking of the young writers as a whole they are a splendid replacement for us, and I don't have to whisper it under my breath. A most gladdening fact is the emergence of a great number of very young talents—boys whose voices are only just breaking, so they're liable to give a shrill note like a young rooster now and again. These boys are our real wealth, and one simply cannot speak about them without excitement and lawful pride. It's wonderful, it's really wonderful that the fertile soil of our land yields such generous crops of talents!

But there is food for thought here as well, and a glimpse into the future would be all to the good. I want to cite some figures which provoke serious thought.

At the first writers' congress, 71 per cent of the delegates were under forty; at the second the percentage dropped to 20.6; at the third to 13.9; and at the present congress it is a mere 12.2 per cent. We're growing old, my brother writers. The time has surely come to draw the young writers more boldly into the work of congresses and the governing bodies of writers' unions and sections. The way it is now, our system is something like the army's where promotion is so slow that by the time a man reaches the rank of general he's so old he looks badly moth-eaten. Grey hair is very estimable, of course, but it can't be the only thing that makes a man eligible for leadership, can it? The average age of the delegates at this congress is almost sixty—doesn't it sound sad? That's what we are today, but a good master thinks of the morrow, and we have the right to consider ourselves good masters and not the kind who'll let their home go to rack and ruin.

And so, as you can see, the promotion of the young has already become an urgent matter which cannot be put off and must be decided promptly.

Lately, we have been hearing many voices in the West clamouring for creative "freedom" for us, Soviet writers.

In 1921, replying to Myasnikov who proposed introducing freedom of the press for all, from monarchists to anarchists inclusive, Lenin wrote:

"Very good! But just a minute: every Marxist and every worker who ponders over the four years' experience of our revolution will say: 'Let's look into this—*what sort* of freedom of the press? What *for*? For *which class*?' "

What will the Marxists and the workers, the wiser for the

fifty-year experience of our revolution, say now on hearing of the solicitations of those who are dreaming of an absolute "freedom" of the press?

The world is gripped by anxiety and alarm. And here someone wants freedom of the press for all—from monarchists to anarchists. What is this—pure naiveté or cool brazenness?

The "freedom"-mongers are trying to corrupt our youth. You're trying in vain, good sirs! Neither the "difficult" nor the "non-difficult" young writers will come with you. They have shared and are going to share with us our motherland's cares and joys. And we shan't surrender any one of them to you.

People have spoken well here about the work of writers in the Great Patriotic War. It's not for nothing that the Political Administration of the Soviet Army is keeping us in the first reserve. If danger threatens our country we shall put on our uniforms again and join the ranks of our own Soviet Army—the old and the young, the "difficult" and the "non-difficult". Because we are flesh of the flesh of our people and everything it has struggled for and gained is infinitely precious to us.

In conclusion I want to say a few words about the future. I wholly subscribe to what Konstantin Fedin said about the novel being the only genre in prose capable of embracing the enormous social changes in our society. The novel allows the writer to unroll a large canvas and depict on it the events taking place in our country, the great changes in people's mentality and outlook, and to trace the lives of his heroes over a long span of years.

It is time our reputed masters of the short story turned to these larger canvases. They have plenty of talent and ability to produce major works of fiction which would further enrich our literature.

On Gorky's initiative we have published and are continuing to publish the histories of different plants and factories. Writers are already working on the histories of collective farms and state farms. These books are not substitutes for novels. That's self-evident. But they can make a basis for an epic novel. And as a source they can be of inestimable help to an author.

I think there is no disparity between our intentions and our abilities. And, after all, we'll have to work as hard even after the jubilee year. I firmly believe that Soviet literature will give its country and the world many new, brilliant no-

vels. We have all the conditions and capabilities to make this true.

From the bottom of my heart I wish all of you great daring in your seekings and success in your creative undertakings.

1967

WHAT HAPPINESS TO LIVE AMONG SUCH SPLENDID PEOPLE!

(Speech at the Third All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers)

Comrades!

It is my pleasure and privilege to salute you at your congress, an event of enormous importance not just for collective farmers, but for all of us, for the whole country.

Much water has flown under the bridges in the past forty years, much has changed in the appearance and the life of a collective farm village, and, what is more important, in the mentality of the collective farmers themselves. It's a generally known truth, and it's not this I wanted to speak about today.

Looking back at the beginning, all those many years ago, one finds oneself thinking again and again: what amazing foresight had to be possessed by the man whose birth centenary we are soon going to celebrate and who charted the course of our country's development, and what amazing willpower and strength had to be possessed by our Party to accomplish everything that was charted and, while carrying through the industrialisation of the country, to venture upon the establishment of a collective farm system!

Flashes of a big war were already playing across the distant horizons, and when the war did come the collective farms were able to provide for the army, the working class and the country as a whole. The four years of exhausting war made us tighten our belts, but we held out and conquered, and did not go begging for bread to the kind uncle across the ocean.

We recall this rather often, but I believe that thanking the collective farmers once too often is something we have to do, and bowing before them once too often won't break anyone's back.

These days all of us are living under the impression of Comrade Brezhnev's speech. The stirring facts, figures and conclusions it contained, compel thought. Take, for instance, the figure of arable land per capita of the population. In the simplicity of our souls the majority of us imagined that we were fabulously rich in land, and in reality it appears that we are not really so very well off. . .

This is one of the priority problems, for it concerns not just the collective farmers, but all of us, citizens of the Soviet Union, the present and the coming generations. We know very well that land is as indivisible as the world and while we lovingly and carefully treat our arable land, the land that feeds us, it is imperative for all of us to treat as lovingly and carefully the rest of the land on which we live and work, rejoice and suffer, and everything that exists on it for the benefit of man. I mean forests and rivers, and their population. We must reconsider our attitude to these questions again and once again, and adopt urgent decisions and take drastic measures where necessary to preserve the weal that Nature has granted us. This restrainedly stern warning which we heard in the speech of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev is most timely. And heeding this warning will be all to the good even for such thrifty masters as you are.

Many of the thoughts voiced by the delegates are stirring for their immediacy. This is as it should be, because the delegates are the thrifty masters of the land and they are outlining the prospects of our great society's further development.

Much has been said from this rostrum about the veterans of the collective farm movement. Please do not think me immodest, but I'll rank myself with the veterans because I was witness to the birth and consolidation of the collective farm system. And today, when I see the flower of the Soviet peasantry representing several generations assembled in this hall, I think with pride of the glorious historical road traversed by our Soviet village in the past forty years, and I realise how imperative it is to present this road boldly and worthily in literature and art.

My professional duty compels me to say a few words about literature. The thing is that in literature just as in farming there are bumper-crop years, and barren years, there are droughts and dust storms. You are fighting your pests successfully but we, I'm sorry to say, still have some Colorado beetles in our midst, the kind that eat Soviet bread yet serve their Western bourgeois masters to whom they smuggle their writings. But, like you in your fields, we are as anxious to rid

our literary gardens of all pests and weeds, and rid them we shall.

In the matter of production, our aims are similar to yours: to produce a sufficient amount of good quality goods. We don't always succeed, but then you don't either.

We are, moreover, required to produce goods of lasting value, but unfortunately not all the books can stand the test of time. But it's a gladdening fact that we already have some good books about village life and, being a hardened optimist, I am absolutely confident that new big novels about our contemporaries will yet be written.

We also have something else in common—the joy and pride we take in and the hopes we pin on our young people. Among the young writers there are many really talented people and it is from them, in the first place, that we naturally expect works of significance and full value.

And in conclusion. To tell you the truth, comrades, my countrymen, delegates to this congress, here I look at you and think how fortunate I am to be living among such splendid people!

Why, mountains can be moved with such mighty people, with such a mighty Party! And, when the need arises, we actually do move mountains.

We can even break the horns of the devil himself, let alone move mountains. And we did break his horns in 1945. If he grows new ones, we'll break them again. We have strength and ability enough for this good deed.

The congress will soon close. In parting, allow me to wish you great accomplishments for the glory of our great, multinational Soviet land.

Allow me to wish you success for the glory of Lenin's Motherland of whom all the toiling mankind, all progressive-minded people in the world are rightfully proud, to say nothing of us—her devoted sons and daughters.

1969

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PROGRESS PUBLISHERS PUT OUT RECENTLY

LUNACHARSKY A. *On Literature and Art* (Collection)

Included in this collection are the more important critical articles written by A. Lunacharsky who was the first People's Commissar of Education in Soviet Russia. The work of Pushkin, Chernyshevsky, Gorky, Mayakovsky, Thackeray, Rolland, Proust and Shaw is analysed, and there are interesting articles about Richard Strauss, Wagner, Moussorgsky, and Rodin.

PROGRESS PUBLISHERS PUT OUT RECENTLY

SUCHKOV B. *A. History of Realism*

Art does not confine itself to a portrayal of reality. Being a special kind of Man's spiritual activity, it is, to a certain extent, independent of real life, though it does, at the same time, depend on it. Accompanying Man, as it does, throughout his life's span, art is by no means an idle amusement. It is an expression of one of Man's two vital needs, in knowledge and in beauty.

These and many other theoretical aspects of art are examined by Boris Suchkov, a prominent Soviet art critic, in this book. Suchkov analyses the work of Rabelais, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Balzac, Stendhal, Dostoyevsky, Proust and some outstanding works of Soviet fiction.